

alfred

# HITCHCOCK'S

mystery magazine



NOVEMBER 11, 1981 \$1.25

UK 85P

Finely honed  
stories from  
Alfred Hitchcock



LOOK FOR THE  
PREMIERE ISSUE OF  
**CRIME**  
DIGEST  
ON SALE NOW

DAVIS  
PUBLICATIONS

## Which one will claim you as its victim?



If you're searching for a mystery, here's a clue: new Raven House Mysteries. Books so frighteningly well-written, you can't help but let the mystery take over your life.

Each murderous crime is so devious that just because you can solve one, doesn't mean you can solve them all.

Raven House publishes new mysteries every month. Look for them wherever paperbacks are sold.



VOLUME 26, NO. 12

NOVEMBER 11, 1981

alfred

# HITCHCOCK'S

mystery magazine

NEXT  
ISSUE  
ON SALE  
NOV. 12

---

## NOVELETTE

THE INCOMPLETE SALMAGUNDI *by S. S. Rafferty* ..... 86

## SHORT STORIES

CLASS REUNION *by Dick Stodghill* ..... 5

HIGHER EDUCATION *by Gary Alexander* ..... 23

CHRISTMASTIME IN PRISON *by Ron Goulart* ..... 28

A PROPER ENVIRONMENT *by James McKimmey* ..... 41

THE PLOUGH HORSE *by Pauline C. Smith* ..... 50

THE CUSTODY THING *by Michael Scott Cain* ..... 56

THEFT BY HANKO *by Ron Butler* ..... 69

KILLING IS EASY *by Robert Lopresti* ..... 81

## MOVIES AND TELEVISION

CRIME ON SCREEN *by Peter Christian* ..... 119

---

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE Vol. 26, No. 12, November 11, 1981. Published 13 times a year every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc. at \$1.25 a copy. Annual subscription \$16.25 in the U.S.A. and possessions; \$18.50 elsewhere payable in advance in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2640, Greenwich, Ct. 06836. Controlled circulation postage paid at Dallas, PA. © 1981 by Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention. Reproduction or use without express permission of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited. Printed in U.S.A. All submissions must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

ISSN: 0002-5224

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



# QUEEN TO PUZZLE YOU. HITCHCOCK TO CHILL YOU.

ALFRED  
HITCHCOCK'S WITH CAUTION

ELLERY QUEEN'S SECRETS OF MYSTERY Edited by ELLERY QUEEN THE DIAL PRESS

ELLERY QUEEN'S

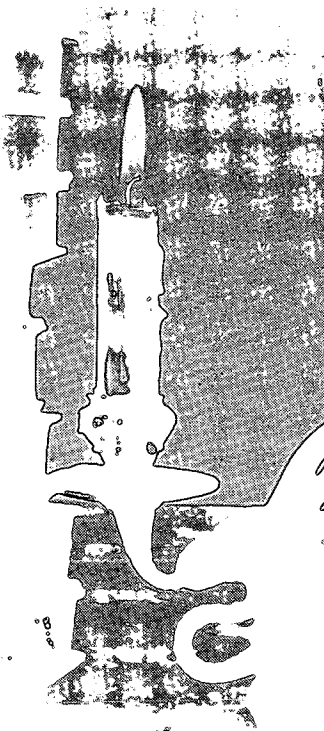
ELLERY QUEEN'S WINGS OF MYSTERY ELLERY QUEEN

ELLERY QUEEN'S CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE ELLERY QUEEN THE DIAL PRESS

ALFRED  
HITCHCOCK'S  
THINGS YOU  
SCARE YOU  
STUFF



ALFRED  
HITCHCOCK'S TALES TO TELL YOU WITH  
FEAR AND TREMBLING



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# ANY 3 TO KEEP YOU UP ALL NIGHT.

## ONLY \$1 EACH.

They've always had a way of keeping you too engrossed to stop reading. Or too frightened to go to sleep.

Queen and Hitchcock have kept millions of readers awake until dawn for many years. Now, you can choose any three of their top ten mystery collections for only \$1 each (\$3 plus shipping) as your introduction to Ellery Queen's Mystery Club.

Each collection features short stories and novellas by some of the most famous masters of our time. Great detective writers like MacDonald, Simenon, Stout and Ellery Queen himself. Explorers of the strange and the macabre like Asimov, Robert Bloch and August Derleth.

In the months to follow, you can look forward to more high-calibre mysteries. As an Ellery Queen club member, you'll receive similar collections, every other month, at prices that are below publisher's list.

Recent selections have included WINTER'S CRIMES ELEVEN, a chillingly good show by some of Britain's best mystery writers. And GOOD AS GOLD, four superb stories featuring The Saint, Leslie Charteris' urbane adventurer with an insatiable appetite for luxury, women and danger.

Top-notch mysteries and low prices aren't the only advantages enjoyed by Ellery Queen club members; we don't ask you to buy any minimum number of books. We send you advance descriptions of each selection. If you don't want it, you can reject it ahead of time. Or send it back within 21 days if you're not satisfied. And you can cancel your membership any time with no further obligation.

Send no money now. Just check the three Ellery Queen and/or Alfred Hitchcock collections you'd like to receive. Fill in the coupon and mail it to Ellery Queen's Mystery Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

Yes, your offer sounds worth losing sleep over! Please enroll me as a member and rush me the three collections I've checked. I enclose no money now. After 10 days' examination, I will either keep the books and pay \$3 plus shipping, or I'll return them. As a member, I understand I will receive advance descriptions of future books, currently at \$7.39 plus shipping. I may, of course, return any book(s) within 21 days for full credit—and may cancel at any time.

Check three boxes only.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ellery Queen's Veils of Mystery               | <input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Send Chills Down Your Spine      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ellery Queen's Scenes of the Crime            | <input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Fill You with Fear and Trembling |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ellery Queen's A Multitude of Sins | <input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Scare You Stiff                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ellery Queen's Secrets of Mystery             | <input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Hitchcock's Tales to Be Read with Caution             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ellery Queen's Circumstantial Evidence        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ellery Queen's Wings of Mystery               |   |

**ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576**

Mr./Mrs./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

(please print clearly)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1 - TE

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E03RIG

Note: Members accepted in U.S. and Canada only. Offer slightly different in Canada.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



November 11, 1981

Dear Reader:

Our novelette, this issue, is *The Incomplete Salmagundi*, by S. S. Rafferty, the ingenious creator of the ingenious Captain Jeremy Cork.

What is a salmagundi? According to one dictionary it's a "mixed dish," or "any mixture or miscellany."

In this issue there are stories about two former classmates, the president of the Princeton Correspondence University of Television and Repair, a blackmailing servant, a patronizing husband who thinks of himself as a race horse and his working wife as a plough horse, an unlucky child of divorce whose mother is accused of killing her father, a very unusual thief, a very unusual private eye, and an expiring comedian who gives the punchline of an old joke as his dying message. All in all, a delicious and completely satisfying salmagundi.

Good reading.

The Editors

Joel Davis, President & Publisher  
Eleanor Sullivan, Editor

Victor C. Stabile  
Leonard F. Pinto  
Carole Dolph Gross  
Constance DiRienzo  
Barbara Bazyn  
Gail Hayden  
Jim Cappello  
Carl Bartee  
Carole Dixon  
Don Gabree  
Joseph W. Rowan  
R. V. Enlow  
Eugene S. Slawson  
Rose Wayner

Senior Vice President & Secy/Treasurer  
Vice President & General Manager  
Vice President, Editorial & Marketing  
Exec. Sec., Rts. & Perm. Mgr.  
Assistant Editor  
Assistant Editor  
Advertising Manager  
Production Director  
Production Manager  
Newsstand Circulation Director  
Newsstand Sales Manager  
Subscription Circulation Director  
Subscription Circulation Manager  
Classified Advertising Director

Ralph Rubino, Art Director

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*The death was melodramatic, but melodrama seldom hurts a newspaper's circulation figures . . .*



The rain beats against the pavement, creating a shifting pattern of white circles on grey asphalt. A real Hoosier gully-washer. I decide against making a dash to the parking lot across the street and go back inside the hotel. A right turn at the lobby takes me to the lounge.

The crowd is elbow to elbow, every table occupied to capacity, standing room only at the bar, the small dance-floor bulging. A combo, straining to be heard above the buzzing voices and raucous laughter, plays "Fre-

nesi." The old Artie Shaw arrangement scaled down for piano, sax, trumpet, and drums.

I edge my way to the bar. A man standing with one side pressed to it pushes back against the fellow at his left. He gains three inches, allowing me six. I squeeze an arm and shoulder into the thin slice of space, nod my thanks, and ask, "What's the occasion?"

"Class reunion," he replies. "There was a cocktail party in the ballroom earlier, then everybody came in here on account of the rain." He sips his drink. "This is a preliminary—the big affair's tomorrow night."

"What class?" I ask, not really caring.

"Midland Central, 1940."

I catch the bartender's eye. When a cognac is placed in front of me I warm it with my hands, then swallow, savoring the sudden heat in my throat and the slight tremor along my spine. I signal for another, then turn to the dancers and the people clustered around the small tables.

All are middle-aged couples—the jitterbug generation—but it isn't "Jukebox Saturday Night" any more, no one is mopping up soda-pop rickies. Now the liquid refreshment is supplied by Jack Daniels and John Jameson.

My eyes settle on one couple. They remain close to the edge of the floor, engrossed in an exhibition of virility. It comes across that they've prepared for this at Arthur Murray's. They're dressed for the part, he in a checked sport coat of pale-green, white pants, and white shoes, she in a flimsy dress that billows out each time she pirouettes.

They move much faster than the other couples, perhaps to conceal the fact that they can't keep time. He remains in a little crouch, not facing his partner, his feet gliding quickly over the polished wood. There is much dipping and bending and every so often she kicks a foot out behind her, holding it poised there for a second. Some people may be impressed but it seems to me that rather than having found the secret of eternal youth they are merely calling attention to the ravages of time.

I recognize them. The man is Arvil Ritchey, a Midland investment broker who's running for Congress, and the woman is his wife. Perhaps the show is designed to gain votes in next week's primary.

Now that my eyes have grown accustomed to the subdued light I see other familiar faces, Jack Gerhart, Ritchey's partner; Mack Douglas, an overweight county commissioner; Jim Rakish, a downtown businessman; Harley Lane, the postmaster; a few others I can't attach names to.



I turn to the bar again. Someone has moved and I have enough room to face it. After a few minutes I hear someone say the rain has stopped and realize the crowd is thinning out.

Suddenly there is a commotion in the lobby. Loud talk and then a man yelling for the police and another for an ambulance. I gulp the rest of the drink, walk to the lobby, see nothing but confused faces, continue past them, and step out into the night air, cool now after the storm.

Women are gathered in small groups on the sidewalk, jabbering excitedly. Across the street a number of men stand near an alley that runs beside the parking lot. I cross and work my way to the front, then kneel beside a man lying on the wet ground at the edge of the parking lot. I recognize him from the crowd at the hotel.

He's dead—struck down from behind by a weapon that must have been cushioned so that it crushed the skull rather than splitting it. His pockets are turned out and one side of his jacket is thrown back. A wallet lies close to the body and papers are strewn about.

I look up and ask if anyone knows who he is. Several start to reply but hesitate when a police car pulls into the mouth of the alley, red light flashing on top. A lone officer approaches and kneels facing me, then rises, returns quickly to the car, and radios for assistance.

Apparently it's the work of a mugger with too heavy a hand. A story for Steve Granger, the *News-Banner* police reporter; column material for me, a short lead-off item for "Around Town with Hal Blinn." A reunion with friends from long ago, death creeping up from behind, an ignominious end of life on a rain-splattered parking lot. Melodramatic, but melodrama seldom hurts a newspaper's circulation figures.

As it turns out, I write the murder story rather than Granger. Only a skeleton crew staffs the *News-Banner* on Saturday. After a breakfast of biscuits and sausage gravy at the Bull's-Eye, I drop by to check the mail and find myself alone in the newsroom when the phone rings.

Granger's on the line. "Can you bail me out, Hal?" he asks. "I let the murder rewrite go till I'd checked on new developments, but now I'm tied up on something else. The clip's on my desk."

"What's come up?"

"Fatal hit-and-run at Washington and Vine. Jim Rakish, who owns the office-supply place on Jackson, was killed."

The news shocks me, as the violent death of someone you know always

does. Rakish, a big taciturn man who kept to himself, was only a nodding acquaintance, but still I'm stunned. I remember him sitting quietly at the table in the lounge the night before. I want to question Granger but he's in a hurry so I let him go after asking if there's anything new on the murder.

"Yeah, they picked up Tobe Gilson just around the corner right after it happened."

"Who's Tobe Gilson?"

"A probationer. Knocked over a convenience-food store last year. First offense, so he pleaded guilty and got probation."

The *Morning Sun* clip on Granger's desk is little more than an obit, and a scanty one at that. The murder victim was Wendell Spurner, a resident of Davenport, Iowa, back in Midland for the reunion. An accountant, unmarried, survived only by a sister whose address is in Shedtown, a neighborhood in southwest Midland with a fitting name.

I walk two blocks to the jail and ask to see Tobe Gilson. The sheriff, as usual, is obliging to the press. Gilson is outraged by his arrest. His black skin glistens with perspiration and his eyes flash belligerently.

"Man," he asks, "would I be stupid enough to bash some guy alongside the head and then stand waiting on the corner?"

"What *were* you doing there?"

"The wife's shopping at Clay's and I get sick of waiting around so I step out for some air and a smoke. I walk down to the corner and the next thing I know they grab me. But they don't have nothing—they're just blowing wind."

After reading the arrest sheet I'm inclined to agree. But he's black, handy, and has a record. A common enough occurrence.

My story is short, only seven graphs. It's puzzling that the *Sun* reporter didn't pick up on the arrest but it gives me a fresh lead. When it's finished I unlock the library, pull the file on Jim Rakish, and leave it on Granger's desk. The few clips inside are business-related. Then I walk the block to Horner's Tavern.

Grady Driscoll, the *News-Banner* court reporter, is alone in the back room playing pinball. I tell him he may have a murder arraignment to cover, repeat Gilson's denial, and inform him of Rakish's death. When I add that I had seen both victims at the hotel he looks up from his game, frowning, and says, "Quite a coincidence."

A little later Steve Granger comes in. The paper is out and his story's on page one.

Rakish was walking to work when struck down a block from his home, one of the houses in a historical district being restored to its former elegance. Only his wife survives.

"This witness you wrote about," I say to Granger. "Didn't she see anything more than that it was a blue or black pickup truck?"

He shakes his head. "She was bent over picking up her paper on the porch half a block away. She couldn't see the driver but says he took off burning rubber before he hit him."

I raise my eyebrows. "*Before* he hit him?"

"That's what she says. The truck was parked a few doors down the street, took off fast, and kept going a block after hitting Rakish, then turned right on Main."

Driscoll has been listening. He walks over and sits down, a thoughtful look on his face. "Maybe it *wasn't* an accident," he says. "For one thing, I don't believe in coincidences."

Granger stares at him, puzzled, so I tell him about seeing both Rakish and Spurner at the hotel. It doesn't really interest him and he leaves after a quick bowl of chili and a beer.

Driscoll remains at the table, deep in thought. After a few minutes he says, "Let's drive out and see where Rakish was hit. Maybe talk to that witness."

I have nothing else planned so I get up and lead him around the corner to my car. Under the circumstances, Granger can't complain about us crossing his beat.

The witness tells us nothing new but points out the spot where the pickup truck was parked. I pull the car ahead until we are at the same point. From it we have a glimpse of Washington Street between the houses.

Driscoll, beginning to get excited, says, "The driver could have seen Rakish approaching. It was no accident, Hal—it was an ambush."

His impetuosity never fails to put me off. "We can't be sure, Grady," I say testily.

He snorts and says, "Let's go see Rakish's wife."

Interviewing a woman who has just lost her husband has never been my idea of a fun way to spend a Saturday afternoon. Driscoll appears

unaffected, however, and to my surprise Irene Rakish is quite composed. She is alone, which is also surprising, because in Midland people gather around the bereaved like cats around a wingless bird. Of course, Rakish was a loner and his wife may have been the same way.

She pours coffee from a pot and hands steaming mugs to each of us, giving me the uneasy feeling we're making a social call. When Driscoll asks, "Did your husband always walk to work?" she nods and after a short pause says, "Unless the weather was real bad."

"Did he know—" Driscoll begins, but then looks at me, unable to recall the murder victim's name. "Wendell Spürner," I tell him.

Again she nods and again hesitates in responding. "They were in the same class at school."

"Good friends?" asks Driscoll.

This time she shakes her head and after the usual delay says, "They weren't close. Jim was never one to make friends easily."

"Did you know them in school?" I ask.

"I was two classes behind, but Jim and I dated so I knew who his classmates were."

"Did they talk last night at the cocktail party?"

"They said hello, that was all. But Jim said Wendell had stopped by the store yesterday afternoon."

Driscoll leans forward. "Did he say why?"

She shakes her head.

"Strange that he'd do that if they weren't friends," I say.

She shrugs, apparently tiring of the conversation. Perhaps her composure is a mask. After a little while she says, "Maybe it had something to do with their military service. They enlisted together."

Driscoll stiffens, frowning. "You mean they served in the war together?"

"Not really. They were with each other a few days at Fort Ben, but then they were assigned to separate units. I don't think they ever saw each other again until yesterday."

"How did they happen to enlist at the same time?" I ask.

She makes a clucking sound, then says, "Don't ask me, they just did. August 24, 1942. It surprised everybody."

Her most of all, I can see. Even after all these years and with her husband dead it still annoys her. Driscoll and I repeat our condolences and leave.

"Another coincidence," he says when we're outside. "This case has too many to suit me."

"It isn't a case, Grady," I remind him. "It's two cases— and at this point there's nothing to connect them."

He glares at me. "The trouble with you, Blinn, is you're a frustrated lawyer. You spout the same stuff I listen to all week in court. You wouldn't believe you had a nose unless you had fingers to feel it with."

As usual when Driscoll gets mad, I laugh. It only makes him angrier. To placate him I say, "It does seem strange, not seeing each other all those years and then both dying violently within twelve hours."

As we drive west on Main Driscoll says, "Stop at Rakish's store."

I tell him it's closed on Saturday afternoon. Nevertheless I go a block south to Jackson and pull into the lot beside Midland Office Supply. Driscoll bangs loudly on the locked door and a man walks toward us from a back room, scowling and pointing at his watch. He calls, "We're closed," but then recognizes us, takes a ring of keys from his pocket, and opens up. He is George Covart, Rakish's partner.

"Won't take a minute, George," I assure him. "Were you here yesterday when Wendell Spurner stopped in to see Jim?"

He was, he says, though he didn't know who Spurner was at the time. The two of them had talked for an hour in the rear office.

"Did you hear anything they said?" asks Driscoll.

"Only when Spurner was leaving. Jim said, 'Are you going there now?' and when Spurner said he was Jim told him, 'Let me know how he reacts.'"

"He didn't say who he was going to see?" I ask.

Covart shakes his head and we learn nothing more from him.

Driscoll says, "Something was going on, all right. Something involving both of them."

This time I agree without hesitation. "Let's look at the microfilm files for August of '42 in the library. Whatever it was might date back to their enlistment. Maybe we can pick up a lead." Driscoll looks skeptical but follows along to the library a block away.

He leaves after an hour, convinced we're wasting time. We've covered only the first ten issues of the *News-Banner* for the month and have found nothing that might tie in with the case. It was an exciting time for war news, however—the invasion of Guadalcanal, the commando raid on



Dieppe, the battle outside Stalingrad. I keep turning the crank and the days slip by. Nothing pertinent appears on the screen but I spend a lot of time reading war stories.

Finally, in the issue of August 22, a Saturday, I find something that draws my attention. That would have been two days before Spurner and Rakish enlisted. As I read the story I feel more and more certain it's what I am looking for.

The body of a nineteen-year-old girl, Marcia Hesston, had been found that morning in a thicket along the Burlington road southeast of town. Cause of death was a blow on the back of her head. Some of her clothing had been torn and police theorized she died trying to fight off an attacker. The murder had occurred elsewhere and the body had been dumped from a car.

The story had been written by Jake Richards, now the city editor of the *News-Banner*, but a young reporter at the time. I make a few notes during a second reading, then quickly scan the pages for the rest of the month. No arrest had been made to that point.

As I start down the outside steps it occurs to me that I've overlooked a possible source of information. I do an about-face, go back inside, and climb the stairs to the stacks where old city directories are stored.

There isn't a 1942 directory so I flip pages of the '41 directory to Sixteenth Street, where Marcia Hesston had lived. My heart skips a beat as I read the entry and I turn quickly to the alphabetical listing and confirm what I've found: Marcia Hesston's next-door neighbor had been Jim Rakish. Further checking reveals that Spurner's sister still lives in the old family home only a few blocks away.

Driscoll isn't at Horner's and there's no answer when I call his apartment. It's getting late so I gulp a sandwich, return to my rooms at the old hotel, change clothes, and then walk to the Midlander where the reunion should be getting under way.

The early arrivals are having a drink in the lounge before going to the ballroom on the mezzanine. The man who made room for me the night before stands in the same spot at the bar but this time without being crowded. I begin talking about the two deaths.

The man, who tells me his name is Harry Speck, knew both victims, but only casually. He's unable to recall who might have been their inti-

mates forty years earlier. "Ask Arvil Ritchey," he suggests. "He was class president—he knew everybody."

It doesn't surprise me. Ritchey's the kind always has to be at the center of things. Running for Congress is an extension of running for class president. He feels a need to reaffirm his popularity. He inherited the brokerage business in which he's now a partner and grew up believing that money and power are God-given rights to a special few.

He's hovering around the ballroom entrance when I reach the mezzanine, greeting each arrival as if it's a private party at his expense. For a moment I watch from a distance, repulsed by his veneer of charm, thinking that without the head-start afforded him by family money he would be considered a bumpkin.

When I mention Spurner and Rakish it unsettles him, almost as if he'd hoped the violent deaths of two class members could be ignored for the sake of a good time. He takes my arm and leads me to a quiet corner away from the others. In the kind of near-whisper usually reserved for mortuaries he says, "Yes, of course I knew them. A terrible thing, just terrible. What is it you want to know?"

"Who were their friends? Who did they run around with?"

He cradles his jaw in one hand, trying to look contemplative. Eventually he says, "I really can't tell you. They weren't—well—"

"They weren't part of our crowd," purrs a female voice behind me. I turn as Eloise Ritchey glides up to join her husband. "We had different interests, so naturally Arv didn't know them well."

Naturally. Kids from the west side had little to do with kids from Shedtoun.

"How about Marcia Hesston?" I ask. "Did either of you know her?"

Eloise recoils as if I had uttered a vulgarity in church. Arvil too looks shocked. "Only by name," Eloise says. "And reputation, of course. There again—"

The thought goes unfinished, but her meaning is clear. If a Shedtoun boy had little chance of breaking into the country-club set, a Shedtoun girl had none at all.

Jack Gerhart, Ritchey's partner, joins us. Sensing the tension, he talks casually for a moment, but between comments on the gathering crowd he asks several carefully camouflaged questions to find out why the Ritcheys are keyed up.

Gerhart is the partner with brains. The one smart move Ritchey ever

made was recognizing the fact that his money and Gerhart's head would make a winning combination. As a result their investment firm has prospered and expanded.

When he discovers the subject of our conversation Gerhart says, "Jim and Wendell were smart kids in school, but real loners. It wouldn't be true to say they went from rags to riches, but they certainly rose well above the point where they started."

"Did you know them well?"

Gerhart shakes his head. "No. I don't believe anyone really did."

I circulate a while, talking to others, but learn nothing. When the line begins forming at the buffet table, I leave and head up High Street toward Horner's. When passing the old school I think that, for all anyone remembers about them, Rakish and Spurner must have walked its halls in a vacuum.

Driscoll is still nowhere in sight but, surprisingly, Jake Richards is. He's an afternoon drinker and retires early, even on weekends. Finding him at Horner's is a stroke of luck.

The stools on each side of him are taken so I stand at his elbow and say, "I was reading one of your old stories today, Jake. Remember the Marcia Hesston murder?"

He turns, scowling at me for having the temerity to question his power of recall. "Of course I remember," he growls. "But damn it, that was forty years ago, how did you come to be reading about it?"

"Just doing a little background work on the murder last night and the Rakish hit-and-run."

"Why, do you think they're connected?"

"Could be. Was anyone ever arrested for the Hesston girl's murder?"

"No, the police never had a real lead. About all they knew was that someone picked her up in a car the night before. They figured she was killed in the car, but probably unintentionally. Whoever she was with tried to get her clothes off and she was fighting him; they found traces of skin under her fingernails. Apparently she was pushed pretty hard and her head hit something sharp—a door handle maybe. It wasn't a hard blow, but she connected just right and it killed her. Myself, I always thought there may have been something the matter with her before it happened."

"Nobody knew who she had a date with?"

"No. She lived alone with her mother and the mother worked second

shift. She said Marcia didn't have a date lined up when she saw her that morning. The girl worked days in a restaurant downtown, so somebody must have asked her out there. Either that or called later."

"Was she a hustler?"

Jake glares. "Who, Marcia Hesston? God, no. She was a real beauty, but quiet. Sang in the church choir, didn't go out much. A real nice girl."

As I walk back to my hotel the air is raw and the wind that never seems to quit blowing across the Indiana plains in May makes it more so. It clears my head but doesn't sort the pieces and make a picture emerge.

Driscoll walks in while I'm reading the Sunday paper in the lobby. He's close-mouthed about where he spent Saturday night but wants to know what progress I've made. The story of the long-ago murder interests him. When I tell him Rakish lived next door to the victim he gets excited.

"That's it, Hal!" he exclaims. "That's the key!"

"And what door does it open, Grady?" Before he can answer I get up and lead the way to the coffee shop. I order a hard roll with butter and coffee. Driscoll, not wanting to disturb the ideas flying around in his head, murmurs, "The same," forgetting that he hates hard rolls.

When the waitress leaves he presents his theory. It was Spurner who picked up the girl. Rakish went along and when the girl died they panicked and enlisted to avoid questioning.

When he finishes, I chuckle. "O.K., smart guy," he flares. "What's wrong with the idea?"

"It's crazy. If it happened that way, why were they killed?"

"Revenge."

"Someone knew they were guilty but waited thirty-eight years to do something about it? Ridiculous."

"So what's your solution, big shot?"

"I don't have one, but let's say Rakish saw who picked her up and he—"

"—left town because he was scared? I don't buy it, Hal. And where does Spurner fit in?"

I shrug off the question. "We're not getting anywhere. Let's talk to Spurner's sister. Maybe she can tell us something."

We drive the two miles to Shetown in Driscoll's old VW. The Spurner

house is a cracker box, but aluminum siding helps and the small yard is neat.

Gertrude Spurner, a thin, hard-eyed, no-nonsense sort of woman, invites us in after I explain why we've come. She welcomes the idea that her brother's death wasn't a routine mugging.

When we're seated in the cramped living room I ask, "Was Wendell's enlistment a spur-of-the-moment decision?"

"Yes, but it was no big surprise, because he was about to be drafted. He did made up his mind all of a sudden though—told us about it on Saturday night and left on Monday."

"Can you remember that weekend?" asks Driscoll. "Was there anything special about it?"

She chews her lower lip a moment, then says, "No, nothing special. On Friday night Wendell drove down to a dance hall in New Castle like he always did. Gas was rationed back then, but he always saved enough for Friday night."

"Why New Castle?" I ask.

"Wendell never felt welcome here in town at the kind of places he liked to go. Big bands and dancing—that's what he liked."

Driscoll, looking puzzled, says, "Didn't feel welcome?"

She gives him a speculative look. "How long you been around Midland, Mister? Wendell was a Shedtown kid, remember."

"Anything unusual happen that Friday?" I ask.

"Not that I know of."

"How about Saturday? Can you remember what Wendell did?"

For a moment she rubs a finger across her lips, then says, "He was gone most of the afternoon, I remember, because he got home about suppertime and told us he'd decided to join up."

"Any idea where he was?"

She shakes her head. "Wendell never was one to say much. I remember he got a phone call, right after lunch. He didn't get many and I was waiting for one, that's how I remember. He went out right after that."

"But you don't know who called?"

"No."

"What about the day before yesterday, Friday? Did he say anything about going to see someone?"

"No. But, like I said, he kept things to himself."

"Had he changed much from when he was a kid?" asks Driscoll.



"Not much. More prosperous, I guess. Oh, and he got religion a few years back. Very serious about it, but he didn't wear it on his sleeve like some people."

When we're back in Driscoll's VW he asks, "Where do we stand now?"

"I don't know. Let's stop and get coffee."

I head for a phone booth when we're inside one of those antiseptic places they call family restaurants, then join Driscoll at a table. "Who'd you call?" he asks.

"Irene Rakish. She said the first Jim knew about Spurner's death was when they heard it on the radio just before he left the house yesterday morning."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"I think if he'd known it Friday night he'd have gone to the police."

"About what?"

"About whatever happened in August of '42. I think he saw who picked up Marcia Hesston, then Spurner saw them at the dance hall in New Castle. The call Spurner got the next day was from the killer."

"I don't get it."

"Only two people, Rakish and Spurner, knew who was with Marcia Hesston. They were paid off to forget what they saw and it was conditional on their getting out of town—enlisting, in other words—so they wouldn't be around to be questioned."

Driscoll mulls it over. "Not bad. It could have been that way, but it would have taken somebody with real money. Then, after all this time, they go back for more, so the killer gets rid of them for good."

"I don't think so. Only Spurner went to see him, whoever he is, and I don't think he was after money. I think he threatened to tell what happened."

"Why, after all this time?"

"I don't know."

Driscoll sighs and slumps down in his seat. My answer doesn't satisfy him. He wants it all wrapped up in a neat package right now. After a little he says, "So who's the killer?"

"No idea," I tell him, but one is beginning to take shape in my mind.

It's a morose group I find slouched around a table at the Backstage Bar, trying to dissolve their Monday-morning blues in cups of black coffee. Driscoll moans that the trial he must cover will be long and dull. Granger

complains that all criminals are stupid and therefore writing about their activities is a job for a moron. Gloria Thompson contends that dealing with school administrators during the final weeks of the term will result in her taking a one-way ride to the state hospital in Richmond.

When they finish and start reluctantly on their rounds I walk as far as Walnut with Gloria, then south to the offices of Ritchey, Gerhart & Company on the ground floor of a building that's been given a face lift. The arched-brick entry is imposing and the interior elegantly appointed, for the purpose, I'm sure, of letting clients know that here is a rock-solid firm worthy of taking whatever resources they have and multiplying them many times over. To me it looks like a Parisian cathouse.

Jack Gerhart's at his desk in the second of two glass-enclosed offices. He motions me in before the receptionist can begin her questioning. I've known him for years as a result of covering civic affairs. He's regarded as a pillar of the community, active in all causes considered worthy and likely to result in having your name or photo in the paper.

Gerhart asks if I'd like coffee but I decline and settle in a chair across from him. He seems unusually cordial and for a moment I wonder if he's foolish enough to think I've come to invest the fortune I've accumulated in the newspaper business. Then I remember that tomorrow is primary day and his partner is running for Congress.

The wall behind him—the only one not of glass—is covered with photos of horses. Gerhart breeds them on a farm west of town and is a leader of Midland's horsey set. I open the conversation, having decided earlier to use the I-already-know-the-answer approach.

"Were you in on the meeting Ritchey had with Wendell Spurner on Friday afternoon?"

The strategy pays off; he assumes I know much more than I do. His jaw muscles tighten and his pale-blue eyes are icy but he says, "No, they talked privately in Arvil's office."

"So you didn't talk to him or hear what was said?"

"I said hello, but I don't make a habit of eavesdropping on private conversations, if that's what you mean."

I assure him it isn't but note that his office and Ritchey's are separated only by panels of glass that don't extend to the ceiling. We talk for a few moments about business and the election, then I leave and walk two doors south to the vacant storeroom serving as Ritchey's campaign headquarters.

The candidate is in conference with several advisors and Eloise Ritchey is giving instructions to a group of women at a bank of telephones. She turns and leads me to a corner near the display window where we can talk privately. I ask, "Did Wendell Spurner stop here on Friday when he visited your husband's office?"

For a moment she studies me from narrowed eyes, then says, "What is it you want, Mr. Blinn? What are you driving at?"

"Just piecing together Spurner's movements."

"Then you think there was more to his death than just a mugging?" Her features are taut and spots of color have appeared on her cheekbones. A hard, ambitious woman, I think, but I smile a little and say, "I don't know at this point. Was he here?"

"No, he wasn't, and I hope you won't bother Arvil with this just before the primary."

I tell her this is all I wanted to know, leave, and walk north to Jackson and two blocks east to City Hall. In the detectives' room off a narrow hallway in the west end of the building I find Greg Staley, Driscoll's friend on the department and the easiest of Midland's detectives to deal with. We go around the corner to a coffee shop and spend an hour discussing the case.

Driscoll is at his desk when I return to the office. After his story is filed we walk to the Backstage for lunch and along the way I tell him what I've been doing. He listens without interruption, which is unusual, but after we're seated and have ordered he says, "It was Ritchey then?"

I grin and say, "Grady, have you ever seen what you thought was a conclusion without leaping at it?"

"It's obvious, isn't it? So when are we meeting Staley?"

"At one-thirty. You want to go along?"

The look he gives me speaks for itself.

The Ritcheys and Jack Gerhart are together in the back room at campaign headquarters when Staley, Driscoll, and I walk in. The color leaves Ritchey's face when he sees Staley but there's no reaction from the others.

Staley, still skeptical about my conclusions, has told us he's tagging along for the exercise so I say, "Ritchey, we'd like to talk to you in private."

Ritchey's mouth opens but it's Eloise who speaks. "Anything you want to say to my husband can be said in front of Jack and me."

Officious women infuriate Driscoll. His face flushes and he blurts, "We've got it figured out, Ritchey—everything. You killed Marcia Heston when you were a kid and then paid off Rakish and Spurner to keep them quiet."

Ritchey's mouth stays open, but still no sound comes out. Eloise jumps up and screeches, "You nosy idiots! Arvil never killed anyone! He—"

"Wait, honey," Ritchey says, finally finding his tongue. "They know about it. I can see that. I don't know how, after all this time, but they do."

Eloise turns on him. "Don't say anything more! What can they know?"

Ritchey reaches out and takes her hand. "They know, all right." Then, looking at Staley, he says, "It was an accident, believe me. I panicked, did a foolish thing in trying to cover it up. Then, when I told Dad, instead of marching me down to the police station he panicked too. Thinking of the family name and all.

"Jim had seen me pick up Marcia and we ran into Wendell at a dance hall in New Castle. I had driven there because I didn't want anyone in Midland to see us together." He pauses, darting a look at his wife, then continues, "Dad gave Jim and Wendell a small fortune to keep quiet about seeing me with Marcia. He made them agree to enlist so they couldn't be questioned."

Driscoll looks at me gloatingly. "See? It was just the way we figured." Turning to Ritchey he says, "Then when they came back for more you killed *them* too."

"No—" Ritchey begins.

Eloise, face livid and eyes flashing, steps in front of him and says, "You people really *are* fools, Arv could no more deliberately kill someone than—than—"

As she runs out of steam Driscoll says, "Come on, lady, it's obvious. Spurner hit him up again so—"

"Hold it, Grady," I interject. "Spurner didn't ask for money on Friday, did he, Ritchey?"

"No."

"What he did was say he'd tell what happened in '42 unless you withdrew from the congressional race. Right?"

Ritchey nods and Driscoll asks, "Why?"

"Because the cover-up preyed on his mind all these years," I say. "He lived with it because he'd given his word, but he'd gotten religion and

when he came back to Midland and learned Ritchey was running for Congress he decided that changed the situation. Knowing what Ritchey had done, Spurner couldn't accept the idea of him in Congress, so he threatened to expose him unless he withdrew from the race."

"It all comes out the same in the end," Driscoll says.

Staley glares at me, thinking I've misled him. "What are you saying, Blinn?"

"I'm saying Ritchey was responsible for the girl's death, but he didn't kill Spurner and Rakish."

"Then who did?"

I nod toward Jack Gerhart.

"Now just a minute," Gerhart says, bristling. "Don't drag me into this."

"You did that yourself," I say to him. "You overheard what was said on Friday and you knew Ritchey wouldn't withdraw. For one thing, Eloise wouldn't let him. Maybe Ritchey thought Spurner was bluffing too, but you didn't. Not that you cared about the race, but you cared about the business. How many clients would you have left after the story came out?"

Gerhart's attempt to laugh is a failure. "Ridiculous," he says. "You can't prove any of this."

"I think we can," I tell him. Then, to Staley, "Take a look in the barn at his horse farm and I'll bet you'll find a pickup with a battered front end. He killed Rakish too because he was afraid he'd tell the story when he found out what happened to Spurner."

Without warning, Gerhart lunges at me, but Staley intercepts him. Eloise has slumped down in a chair, suddenly an old woman. Driscoll stands scowling at me, confused by the turn of events.

He's still cool when I see him later at Horner's. In less than an hour he disposes of the better part of a bottle of Bushmill's. His pride is hurt. He fancies himself as the sleuth on the *News-Banner* staff.

Tobe Gilson has been released from jail, his cell taken by Gerhart. Staley found the pickup truck in the barn and Gerhart's been charged with Rakish's murder. Another likely will be filed for the killing of Spurner.

Ritchey has withdrawn from the race but remains free, at least temporarily. The prosecutor has doubts about bringing him to trial at this late date. There are no witnesses to call other than those of us who heard



his confession, and after talking to his lawyer Ritchey doesn't plan to plead guilty and may deny ever having said anything. Still, with the story coming out, he's finished in this town.

I sympathize with Driscoll and say, "Remember, Grady, I had more time to work on it than you did. The advantage was all mine."

He nods and seems to brighten a little. "Well," he says, "a lot of people will be reading your column tomorrow. Jake says he's going to run it on page one."

I shrug and order another round. It doesn't matter to me where Jake runs it—my paycheck will still be the same. No overtime, he'd told me, despite the weekend work.

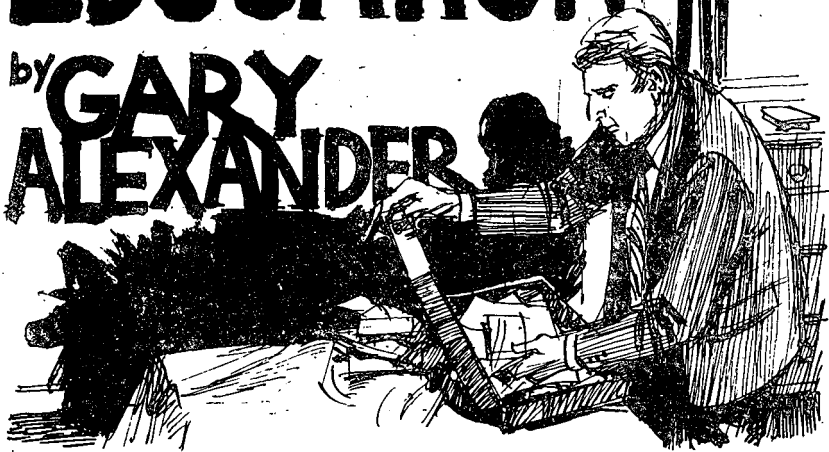
I think back to Friday night at the hotel and marvel that only seventy-two hours have passed. There should be some feeling of accomplishment, I think, but all I feel is tired.



*The hotel, Muster observed, was hardly the Halls of Ivy . . .*

# HIGHER EDUCATION

by **GARY  
ALEXANDER**



Leon Ulvestad wiped the grime from the window of his third-floor room and stared out at the man he thought he had seen earlier at the post office. The man's car was parked across the street, between the pawn shop and tattoo parlor.

The man stepped out of his car, glanced up at Ulvestad, and headed for the hotel entrance. It was the same man for sure: scrawny, bald, bow tie, and threadbare sport jacket, old as Methuselah.

Ulvestad cursed and began scooping checks, money orders, and miscellaneous paperwork into a briefcase. It had been going so well in this town too. Several more weeks and he'd have had his fattest score ever.

And this geezer coming up to collar him! What was he, Attorney General's office? A bunco detective? He looked more like a school crossing guard, but there was no way to tell any more. You couldn't count on white socks and a shaved neck to tip you off; those days were gone forever.

One thing was for certain. He was no student dropping by to pay his tuition in person.

As usual, Ulvestad's suitcase was two-thirds packed; he wouldn't have to leave much behind this time. His important and incriminating records were in his other office—the trunk of his car.

Ulvestad ran out to the end of the hall, wrenched open the window, and descended the fire escape. Thus did the Princeton Correspondence University of Television Repair terminate operations.

He loaded his baggage into the car and accelerated down the alley. He slowed, scanning behind him for the old man—negative—then turned the corner and inched through the uptown traffic, headed for the freeway and the next big town in line.

That had been a close one, he thought. Damn near as close as last year in L.A. and his Harvard School of Air Conditioning and Refrigeration. One night on his way home he had spotted the stakeout. He kept on going, not stopping until he hit Fresno.

Ulvestad considered a final run to the post office. The afternoon mail would be in, and perhaps it held more payments from students. He could deposit them at the closest branch of his bank, cash it in at the first one beyond.

No, no, no—don't get greedy, damn it! That's how they had made him, assigning that old man to watch the post office and trail whoever used the box number in the advertisements.

Ulvestad drove on, sifting options for his next scam. It was so simple. Breeze into town, set up a bank account, rent a post-office box, buy ads in some magazines, have contracts and promo literature done at a print shop, and when the rubes signed up and sent their bread, send them copies of lessons he'd bought on the cheap ten years ago from a legitimate correspondence school that had folded its tent. Get those first lessons mailed out to the "students," giving them enough to do for a month or

so. By the time they were getting antsy about the corrected lessons they hadn't received back, Ulvestad was long gone.

Ulvestad laughed, thinking of the come-ons in his blurbs. "Be Your Own Boss! Study At Your Leisure! No Classroom Pressures!"

Yep, there were all sorts of future possibilities. He had hardly scratched the surface.

It was growing dark and rush-hour traffic was forming around him. He checked his mirrors continually, but there was no sign of the geezer's car. Finally, at the edge of the business district, the logjam loosened. The freeway turnoff was a mere mile away—home free!

But instead, Ulvestad spotted a cocktail lounge on the right, pulled over, and went inside. Since he was in the clear, he saw no harm in having a few drinks to settle his nerves.

He gulped down a bourbon and ordered another. It was a nice, friendly lounge, a going concern with dark paneling and a plush carpet. He signaled the bartender for a refill and was simultaneously greeted by an inspiration, a flash of genius, the germ for his next operation.

The Massachusetts Institute of Mixology. A natural! He'd use the sex-appeal angle on this one, like he had with the Cornell School of Accident Investigation.

Ulvestad sipped his drink, enjoying a smug glow, mulling over the fine details of his bartending school, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He swiveled around and found himself face to face with the skinny old man.

"Mr. Leon Ulvestad, I presume?"

Ulvestad shook his head. "You have me mixed up with someone else, pal."

The man chuckled and extended his hand.

"Oh, I'm not a policeman, Mr. Ulvestad. My name is Arnold Muster and I'm retired. I'd just like to have a little chat with you. I won't take much of your time. Shall we?"

Ulvestad followed Muster to a corner table, figuring that he'd play along until he learned the geezer's game. Ulvestad was a tall, beefy man. He could break Muster like a dry twig if it came to that.

After drinks were served, Muster explained, "I enrolled in a correspondence course some years ago. I saw an ad recently in a magazine. It was for the Princeton Correspondence University of Television Repair. The phrasing of it and the promises were similar to the one I had an-

swered. Since it was a local address, my curiosity got the best of me. I hung around the post office until you picked up your mail, then trailed you to your hotel. That dump is hardly the Halls of Ivy."

"You're barking up the wrong tree; Arnold," Ulvestad said. "My name is Lockhart. I'm a salesman, not a teacher." Ulvestad even had false identification to prove it.

Arnold Muster smiled. "Oh, you're a salesman all right, and a fairly good driver too. Luckily the traffic slowed you down. I was able to keep you in sight until you stopped here.

"Of course you wouldn't remember me, Mr. Ulvestad. I enrolled in your school over eight years ago. The cost was \$725, including the discount you so generously offered if the full amount was paid in advance. Well, the first three lessons came, but no more. Nor did I receive the tools that were promised. I had to buy those on my own.

"I live on a fixed income, Mr. Ulvestad. Social Security and a small pension. We still haven't fully recovered from that setback, and Mildred, my wife, was quite upset. I thought for a while she was going to leave me."

"You have my sympathy," Ulvestad said. "However, you're talking to the wrong person. Now if you'll excuse me."

Muster placed a bony hand on Ulvestad's wrist as he tried to get up. "Please bear with me, Mr. Ulvestad. I'd like to show you something."

He took two small pieces of machinery from his jacket pocket. Each had key slots in their ends. "The lock cylinders from your driver's door and your trunk, Mr. Ulvestad. I didn't find a thing on or under the seats."

He returned them to his pocket. "Frankly, at that point I was scared. I was only playing a hunch to begin with and didn't even know your name, and there I was committing a crime. But when I gained entry into your trunk I hit the jackpot. Old lessons, some of which I'd had in my course. Not to mention printers' bills, promotional material, and whatnot. Those cardboard boxes and their contents, incidentally, have been safely transferred to my car. I called Mildred. She caught a cab over here and is at another location. If she doesn't hear from me in a reasonable length of time, she'll call the police."

Ulvestad slumped in his seat. "What do you want?"

"You *don't* remember, do you?" Muster asked. "Well, I can't blame you. So many years, so many different schools. I must have been one of your first pigeons. The Temple Locksmith Academy."



Ulvestad said nothing, but he did recall the scam. It seemed every other page in the magazines he advertised in offered locksmith training. He couldn't imagine there being enough defective locks in the entire world for all those people to tinker with. It hadn't been his greatest moneymaker.

"I didn't learn much in three lessons, Mr. Ulvestad, but it was sufficient for me to do what I just did. For that I am grateful."

"What do you want?" Ulvestad asked again, hoarsely.

Muster took a pen from his pocket and began writing on a bar napkin. "Oh, just simple restitution. I really don't want to get involved in a criminal trial. Spending hours on a witness stand sounds positively exhausting."

"How much?"

"The \$725, naturally. Adjusted for inflation. Eight years' worth of interest. And a little something for my inconvenience and mental anguish."

Muster handed Ulvestad the napkin. "I think you'll find my figures aboveboard. After the locksmithing disaster, I took a correspondence course in accounting. It was very rewarding. I bring in a bit of egg money doing tax returns."

Ulvestad studied the bottom-line figure. It would clean him out and then some. But under the circumstances it seemed eminently fair.

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.**

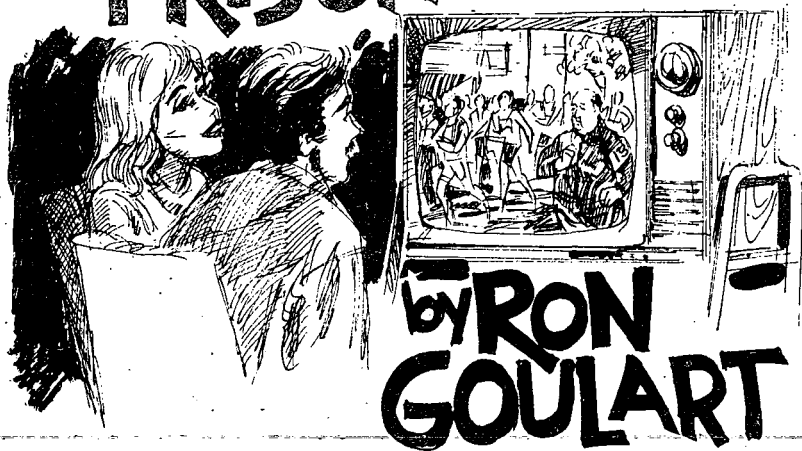
**All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1932, Marion, Ohio 43305.**

---

**For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.**

*Yoyo was stabbed in the park, and it wasn't even dark yet . . .*

# CHRISTMASTIME IN PRISON



They all skirted the dying man, avoiding his sprawled body, stepping off the late-afternoon park pathway. He was lying face-down across the sidewalk, a thickset man of sixty in a rumpled tweed suit, his legs touching the burgeoning grass of the slanting Central Park field.

Scrib Merlin, muttering, "Another halfwit drunk," almost went by too. But then he recognized that suit and the close-cropped grey hair.

Dropping to his knees, he touched the man gingerly. "Yoyo, what's wrong?" Carefully, he tried to ease him up and over into a sitting position. That's when everybody saw the blood, the people who were shortcutting through the park as another workday wound down. Most of them stopped, forming a lazy half circle around Scrib and the man whose chest was splotted with growing red.

"Scrib, old buddy," said Yoyo Hobbs, recognizing him through glazing eyes.

Putting his arm around the dying comedian's shoulders, Scrib turned to the growing crowd. "Get an ambulance, somebody!" Three lean men in runners' warmup suits on the path across the way, walking and preoccupied, caught his eye.

"Stabbed," murmured a frail woman. "Stabbed and it isn't even dark."

"Payoff," muttered Hobbs. "Scrib, I—he fooled me. No payoff—"

"Who? Who knifed you, Yoyo?"

"Big money—big—"

His face close to the older man's, Scrib repeated, "Who knifed you?"

The crowd kept growing. There were maybe forty people now, edging nearer, watching, whispering.

Hobbs became aware of them. "Audience, huh? Too many ears," he said. "But I—I'll tell you."

Scrib moved his ear up to the parted lips. "O.K., tell me."

"It was—it was Christmastime in prison and—he was—the one who couldn't tell a joke."

Yoyo made a funny sound then. A sound you don't often hear. The sound people make when they die.

"Here comes a cop!" said somebody.

"Too late," said the frail woman. "They always get here after you're dead."

Darkness was filling the space between his dusty office window and the brick wall across the alley. Scrib, hunched slightly at his typewriter, two-finger-typed the last line of the radio commercial for the Dupkirk Hotel. "The convenient and moderately priced Manhattan hotel out-of-towners habitually flock to," he read aloud from his yellow copy paper. "You'd really have to be a yokel to think West Seventeenth and Eighth Avenue is convenient to anything."

"I bet if you put your mind, which is basically, it seems to me, a good

one, to work, you could find positive things about your job, Scrib," said the young woman who was sitting, upright and knees together, in his only other chair. She was pretty, thin, and blonde. "Take my case, for example. I'm doing just fine, or at least fine by the modest standard I apply, as a contributing cartoonist on *The National Buffoon*, yet I'd much rather be gainfully employed at my first love, which—"

"You're never, Salty, going to make it as a nude model." Scrib yanked the copy out of his ancient machine and tossed it into the outbox.

"That's a negative attitude."

"The average halfwit reader of skin magazines wants to slobber over girls who are much heftier than you are."

"Trends come and go, that's what mass culture is all about," persisted Salty Warbeck. "One year it's hefty, the next—"

"It's never going to be skinny," he pointed out, frowning. "You're never going to see a skinny *Playpen* Cutie of the Month or a skinny *Houseboy* Honey of the Month."

Salty smiled. "I'm lean, not skinny."

"I like you exactly as you are," he said. "But I don't have mass taste."

"Don't underestimate yourself, Scrib; because, honestly, if you weren't able to identify with the mass, you couldn't work here at Amthrax & Associates as a copywriter and be doing so darni well at it."

"I'm not doing well at it," he informed her. "Which is why you find me here at seven in the evening, batting out copy for the Dunkirk and Waterloo Hotels, two of Manhattan's—"

"Mr. Amthrax told me once, when I ran into him in the elevator, that you're doing very—"

"You're an attractive girl, naturally he'd lie to you," Scrib said. "Me he hollers at and calls Dimbulb and Peabrain. You don't know what it's like to be thirty-two and have to sit here and have a dwarf heap—"

"He's not a dwarf, he's a midget."

Scrib shrugged. "He's smaller than me, whatever he is, and running his own agency even though he's not more than a couple years my senior. If only I could've made it as a comedian, instead—"

"I know why you're so especially grumpy today." Salty stood, gracefully, up and crossed to his worn wooden desk. "It's because you found that body in the park."

"He wasn't a body when I found him," Scrib said. "Yoyo was alive, trying to tell me something. Something important."

"Let the police worry about that," she advised, touching his shoulder. "They don't know about this."

"But isn't that against the rules? I mean, when you hear a dying message from someone aren't you obliged to inform the author—"

"It isn't exactly a law, Salty."

"Wasn't it something like this that got you into trouble before?"

"Not exactly."

"Yes, it *was* another dying comedian you told me about once, Scrib," she said. "You seem to specialize in finding dying comics who are determined to—"

"The other business was three years ago and that comedian found me," said Scrib. "Today I was just simply crossing the damn park on my way back from the halfwit Lincoln Center library and—well, there was Yoyo Hobbs in the act of dying."

"You must feel truly awful, finding a friend bleeding out his—"

"Yoyo wasn't exactly a close friend," Scrib corrected. "He did some radio spots for us a few weeks ago for the Nuts 2 U Candy Shops. Yoyo played one of the singing cashews. Originally he was cast as a peanut, but—"

"Still, he was someone you knew and, being a comedy buff yourself, I just bet you used to talk to him about his better days, when he was a bigtime comic on TV."

"Yoyo was never exactly bigtime—he went through his life being a second banana," said Scrib. "Which still put him several bananas ahead of me."

"Maybe, you know, you could still try to be a comic." Salty stroked his nearest shoulder. "After all, thirty-two isn't exactly over the—"

"I can't do that," he said quickly. "What I would love to do, though, is have an agency of my own. A small shop with just a few clients, specializing in humorous copy. I know I could take the Nuts 2 U account if—"

"That would, wouldn't it, require a lot of—"

"Money, yeah, I know." He stood. "I've been thinking though. If I can solve Yoyo's murder I may be able to get hold of the dough I need."

"Is there a reward?" Her lovely grey-green eyes widened.

"Who'd pay a reward to find out who killed a second-rate comedian? What I'm talking about is this," he said, moving clear of her and toward

the doorway. "From what Yoyo told me I've figured out he must've been involved with something that was going to bring in big bucks."

"Could be, Scrib, he was merely babbling. People often do that when they're dying." Salty followed him out into the small shadowy reception room of the Amthrax & Associates agency. "They talk about things they've done, things they had, things they miss. Like Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane* remembering his wagon that—"

"Sled," he said. "And Yoyo wasn't goofy at the end, he was struggling to convey something important to me." Scrib shook his head. "The trouble is, he noticed all those halfwit gawkers and he got cagey. Tried to tell me who to go after without giving it away to anyone else."

"What was it he whispered? Something about Christmas?"

"He said, 'It was Christmastime in prison and he was the one who couldn't tell a joke.'"

"Wrong time of the year for Christmas." Salty coughed into her slender hand. "Sounds to me as though he was just babbling the way—"

"No, he gave me an important clue."

"So what does it mean?"

"Right at the moment I don't know," admitted Scrib. "But maybe after we search his apartment I will."

They were not the first.

"Used this fire escape in here," said Scrib from the small bedroom of the late comedian's small walkup apartment. "Jimmied the window, left a handsome muddy footprint on the rug."

Hesitating between the bedroom and the disordered living room, Salty said, "I hope you'll accept this suggestion, Scrib, in the spirit in which it's given. Let's get out of here. Let's, really now, phone the police and—"

"Tell them we just happened to break into Yoyo Hobbs' apartment, by jobbing his front door, and we noticed that another housebreaker had been here before us?"

"Listen, it just occurred to me—maybe the police themselves, you know, did this," she suggested hopefully, taking a tentative step across the threshold.

"Nope, they don't break in by way of windows and they most usually wipe their feet first." Scrib was scowling down at the footprint on the worn pseudo-oriental carpet. "This guy was pretty obvious—turned draw-

ers upside down, tossed the mattress—wanted anyone who came in after him to write this off as a break-in and burglary. Except—

“Except what?”

“He didn’t,” said Scrib, walking around her and back into the small buff-walled living room, “bother to take the television set or that clock radio by Yoyo’s bed.”

“It’s a pretty old TV,” she said. “Probably only the Museum of Broadcasting would want such—”

“And look at this.” Scrib was looking through a desk calendar on the lame little desk against the wall. “Six days missing from last month, torn clean out.”

“Your friend Yoyo might’ve done that.”

Calendar in hand, Scrib sat down on the swayback green sofa. “March 17 through 22. What could he have been doing—”

“Marching in the St. Patrick’s Day parade maybe.”

“Let’s refrain from the Nora Charles wisecracks.” Scrib paused to snap his fingers. “That was the week Yoyo phoned and asked me if I had a videocassette player. I pointed out that on the salary Amthrax pays me, a salary that wouldn’t even keep a dwarf alive in—”

“Midget.”

“That I could barely afford a small-screen TV let alone a Betamax,” said Scrib, resting the calendar on his knee. “Yoyo was very anxious to get access to a video machine, but when I suggested he use the one at Audio-Video Studios, where we tape commercials, he told me he had something he wanted to view in private.”

“A porno movie,” suggested Salty, perching on the fat arm of the sofa and causing it to issue a wheezy groan. “There are hundreds of those available, you know, offering every sort of vile—”

Scrib shook his head. “Yoyo was an old man, but not a dirty old man. Not that he was moral or especially trustworthy, but he didn’t go in for porn stuff.”

“How’s his anxiety over viewing a video cassette tie in with the missing leaves off that calendar?”

“I don’t exactly know,” said Scrib, rising and returning it to the dead comic’s desk.

“Do you know where he finally did see his cassette?”

“Nope.” Scrib stood in the center of the room, looking slowly around. “Damn. He assured me there was big money in this somewhere.”



"He also got killed," Salty reminded him.

The loft studio was long and narrow, one immense room rather haphazardly divided into sectors. The most space was given to Salty's work area, which was cluttered with, in addition to her yellow-painted drawing board, a half dozen unmatching chairs, imitation Greek vases, plaster casts of classic sculpture, an articulated skeleton on a wheeled stand, scarves, pairs of boots, peacock feathers in a green glass bowl, a canning jar jammed to the brim with glistening glass marbles, a windup monkey musician who'd lost one of his drumsticks, a frilly black-lace bra, an empty banjo case, stacks of back issues of *The National Buffoon*, a framed cartoon drawing of *Krazy Kat* that leaned against an eagle-head brass hatrack, one red roller skate, and an imitation jade Buddha some two feet high with a coin slot dead center in his ample stomach.

Scrib was seated in an ice-cream-shop chair, fidgeting, absently watching the television set in the next living area over.

The place had an abundance of windows, in the high walls and in the ceiling. Most of the wall windows were recessed and accompanied by window seats. Salty was on one, tugging off a boot. "My suggestion would be, if you don't mind my giving you some helpful advice, to abandon—"

"I'm not about to abandon big money." Scrib turned to watch her. "Hey, remember what I said about sitting there? Those old windows, most of them, are so weak that if you lean back hard you're likely to go crashing out and—"

"It's only five floors up." She tugged off the second boot. "You really are, and keep in mind that I'm uncritically fond of you, Scrib, a fussbudget. I've lived here—what is it now? Sixteen months and I've never fallen out of a window yet."

"One fatal plunge is all it takes."

Making a demure snorting noise, she stood up, barefooted. "If I'd kept track of the number of times you've—"

"Numbers!" Scrib leaped up.

"What's wrong?"

He beat both fists on his chest, the way silent movie actors did when confessing great sins. "Another damn joke! Why do all these dying comedians tell me jokes? Why don't they simply—"

"Are you getting an insight into what Yoyo Hobbs was raving about in his final minutes on earth?"

"It's a joke, a venerable one, that Yoyo was still telling all the time," he said as he slowly settled back into the wrought-iron chair. "A favorite of his, one I've heard a dozen times and should've rememb—"

"So what's the darn joke?" She glided closer to him on pretty bare feet.

"It's Christmastime in prison," he explained, "and this social worker visits the prisoners at dinnertime with the warden as his guide. All of a sudden a prisoner gets to his feet and says, 'One ninety-six,' and all the rest of them start laughing like crazy. Another con pops up and says, 'Twenty-seven,' and that brings down the house. Even the guards are chuckling. 'Fifty-eight,' says another convict and gets a tremendous laugh. The visitor asks the warden what the heck is going on and he explains that the prisoners are telling jokes. They've heard them so often that they know them all by heart and to save time they just mention the number of the joke. Just then a wrinkled-up old prisoner totters to his feet and says, 'Two thirty.' There isn't so much as a snicker. The social worker asks why and the warden tells him, 'Oh, he never could tell a joke.' Yeah, that's what Yoyo was alluding to."

Salty's face was expressionless. "That's not much of a joke, even for a dying man to tell."

"He wanted to pass that number on to me," said Scrib. "Sure, two hundred and thirty."

She wrinkled her faintly freckled nose. "You sure that's the number he always used for the one who couldn't—"

"Yeah, yeah, I heard it enough to memorize it," said Scrib, standing again. "He was stabbed about four o'clock. Two thirty can't be the time he was attacked."

"An address?"

"Could be, except he was knifed in the park and didn't, according to what the cops let me overhear while I was hanging around, stagger more than a few hundred yards after he was stabbed up in that patch of trees. A nice secluded spot it was, without a single witness."

"Maybe it's the number of a locker."

"If it was a locker, Yoyo'd have tried to slip me a key or a claim check."

"Maybe he was too far gone to reach for a key."

"Two thirty. What sort of numbers do taxis have? —Hey! Look!" He pointed at the TV screen he'd been watching out of the corner of his eye.

"Runners," she said, puzzled. "There was a ten-kilometer fun run in

the park this afternoon. Some kind of Executives For Fitness-sponsored race. I got the promo piece at the *Buffoon* offices."

"See what those people have pinned to them?" Sprinting to the set, Scrib turned up the sound.

"Over four hundred executive types, male and female, participated in this afternoon's run, Bud," one announcer was saying to another, "and if you'll look closely you'll spot me bringing up the rear. Panting along in my orange running togs, number 316—and that's about where I finished in—"

Scrib killed the sound. "That race was going on when Yoyo was killed," he said, tapping a finger against the glowing screen. The jogging parade of runners faded and was replaced by a closeup of a steaming bowl of noodle soup. "Suppose a rendezvous had been set up, Salty? A runner drops out for a couple minutes to meet Yoyo. Yoyo had something to sell and this was going to be the payoff. Instead he gets a knife in the ribs."

"A video cassette?" she suggested. "Is that what Yoyo was selling?"

"Sure, it must be." He sat on the edge of his chair, tapping his feet on the hardwood flooring. "The killer takes the cassette and instead of handing over cash he pulls a knife. Yeah, you can hide a cassette and a knife under a sweatshirt."

"Now," Salty said, "would be a good time to phone the law."

"No, now is a good time to find out who wore number two thirty this afternoon."

"That number, Scrib, might pertain to a post-office box or—"

"It could even be the waist measurement of an elephant," he said. "But let's try to connect it to one of those runners."

She sighed. "I guess I can phone Roscoe in the morning."

"Roscoe?"

"Roscoe Chu—he edits the *Gotham Running Tab*," explained Salty.

"They cover all the local running events, list all the participants."

"Must make for stimulating reading."

"If you were a runner, it would. Roscoe'll have the list of people who entered the race."

"O.K., good. Find out who was number two hundred and thirty and where he finished," he told her. "I figure two thirty came in toward the end, since he had to take a few minutes out of the race to do away with Yoyo."

"Are you sure you—"

"I'm sure," he said.

The next night it rained, a hard-falling rain that hit at all the many windows of Salty's apartment-studio.

Salty, clad in nonfashion jeans and an old college sweatshirt, was at her tilted drawing board, scanning a nearly blank page and biting on the end of a pencil. "It's basically," she said, "dishonest."

"True," agreed Scrib, who was slouched in a nearly authentic Morris chair. "Same as murder."

"Just because this—what's his name again?"

"Talbot Sondeck," he said. "A very wealthy man, family money. Also a chap who's had a bit of trouble now and then with the law."

"That doesn't mean he killed Yoyo Hobbs."

"Right, could be the guy's merely a philanthropist," said Scrib. "He's going to pay us \$200,000 to keep quiet about—"

"Not us," said Salty, twisting on her high stool, "you."

"You mean when I collect the cash tomorrow you don't want so much as—"

"Not a penny, no."

He shrugged one shoulder. "It ought to be nearly enough to set me up in business."

"Blood money," she said quietly. "And you really aren't certain if Talbot Sondeck is—"

"Of course he is." Scrib straightened, held up his left hand, and began ticking off his fingers as he went over the explanation again. "Talbot Sondeck, age thirty-eight, was number two thirty in the race yesterday. Sondeck, I found out from microfilm files of *The Times*, was picked up three times in the past five years for suspected unsavory activities with underage girls. He is also, I discovered by asking some discreet questions in the video shops in his posh East Side neighborhood, a video nut. Has not one but two recorders and his very own video camera. He's noted in that same neighborhood for still having very young and sexy ladies up to his penthouse. What's the logical conclusion?"

"Very well, this dippy semi-millionaire maybe likes to take video movies of himself and his young lady friends."

"Exactly." Scrib chuckled. "Yoyo got hold of a couple of the roughest cassettes probably. How? Simple. On March the-eighteenth he was hired to entertain at a party Sondeck threw. He did his surly-waiter routine,

swiped from Vince Barnett, which was something Yoyo did now and then to earn extra dough."

He'd run out of fingers and started on his other hand.

"We now have Yoyo in Sondeck's penthouse on the eighteenth, something I confirmed from Yoyo's sleazy agent. What did Yoyo do? Obviously he prowled around the place while the party was going on. Could be he was hoping, his financial state being what it was, on borrowing a little jewelry or some cash out of the coats and purses in the bedroom. Somehow he stumbled on Sondeck's little cache of incriminating cassettes and, curious as to what might be on them, he swiped one or two."

Salty tried to concentrate on the drawing in front of her. "All you have is conjecture, not—"

"I've got Talbot Sondeck." He grinned broadly. "Because when I phoned him this afternoon and hinted at what I might know the guy absolutely panicked. Pleading with me not to go to the cops, begged for a chance to buy my silence."

"Could be he put on the same act with Yoyo Hobbs."

"I'm not as dumb as Yoyo," Scrib pointed out. "He gets the cash ready and tomorrow, midday, I phone him again. I set up a meeting in a nice public place where there are no trees or shrubs."

"And Talbot Sondeck turns up with the police and they grab you for attempted blackmail."

"This guy has a record, Salty," reminded Scrib. "He can't keep bribing his way out of trouble forever. If I talk, the police'll maybe dig into his latest activities. Even if they can't tie him in with Yoyo's murder they'll find out lots of other—"

"Yes, exactly."

Salty dropped her pencil and it rolled down across her board and hit the floor. "Scrib, is—"

"Yeah," Scrib verified unhappily, "he's Talbot Sondeck."

The man who'd stepped out of the shadows beyond the lighted work area was tall and lean. Tanned, slightly handsome, his sandy hair close-cropped. He wore dark jeans, a navy-blue pullover, and black sneakers. In his black-gloved right hand he somewhat casually held a .38 revolver. "Amateurs are always so easy to outfox," he said in a smug, very nasal voice.

Salty said, "Roscoe."

Nodding, Sondeck eased closer to them. "Yes," he said, smiling. "For

all his devotion to nonconformist life styles and natural foods, Roscoe Chu has considerable respect for a man of my means. After some soul-searching, Roscoe decided to phone me to mention someone had been asking after me. By the time he did, I'd already had Mr. Merlin's quite unsettling extortion offer. Asking if the curious Miss Warbeck had, by chance, a gentleman friend, I was told she did indeed and his name was Scrib Merlin. I really am going to have to take care of the pair of you."

"Going to make it look like a burglary?" Scrib asked.

"Exactly, yes."

"Too many people to kill," Scrib said. "First Yoyo, then the two of us."

"Not at all," cut in Sondeck. "You forget you're living in one of the murder centers of the nation. You are also, forgive my snobbishness, not very important people. Neither was Yoyo Hobbs. The law won't spend much time in—"

"No, no," sobbed Salty, doubling up on her stool and hugging her middle. "I don't want to die. Oh, no, no. Please!"

"Not so much noise," warned Sondeck.

She stumbled off the stool, bent and shivering. "I'm an artist, I want to live a long time. Oh, no, please—don't kill me!" Salty dropped to her knees next to the skeleton on the wheeled stand and sobbed loudly and forlornly.

Sondeck exchanged glances with Scrib. "I've never liked women who crack up under pressure."

Scrib said, "Look, suppose you let her go and—"

"Not possible. You both have to die."

"Die?" cried Salty. "Oh, this is so awful, so dreadful. Oh, please, please!" Then she shouldered the skeleton hard.

It rolled, as she'd anticipated, right into Sondeck.

"Get him!" she shouted at Scrib.

Scrib dived for the backpedaling murderer.

But he never managed to tackle him.

Sondeck did an unexpected backwards somersault over the banjo case, stumbled, and fell into a window alcove.

His full weight hit against the wide window frame and his body hesitated there for a long second framed against the wood and glass. Then there was an awful rending sound as the window gave way. Sondeck, gun in hand, tangled in squares of glass and fragments of wooden frame, went

slamming out into the rainswept blackness and fell in silence down to the wet street five stories below.

Scrib got up, shaking his head. "Why the hell did you do that?" he asked Salty.

She was still on her knees on the floor. "To save your life," she answered, "and mine."

He stalked to the window and jabbed a finger toward the black opening. "There went \$200,000," he said.

"I'm sorry. It won't happen again," she promised.



#### SUBSCRIBER ASSISTANCE

**MOVING?** We need 6 weeks' notice. Please attach your label to the space below and write in your new address.

**QUESTION OR PROBLEM?** It can be handled faster if we have your label.

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE:** From time to time the AHMM mailing list is made available to companies that want to send promotional material offering their products. To do this they must have our approval of the mailing piece itself and of what they are selling. If you prefer not to receive these mailings, please tell us and we will remove your name. Write to the address below.

**EXPIRATION DATE:** In the upper right hand corner of your mailing label you'll find the date of your last issue—e.g., JAN 80 means your subscription expires with the January 1980 issue.

New  
address?  
Put it  
below  
MAIL TO:

**Please attach here your AHMM  
label from the cover of your  
most recent issue.**

**ALFRED  
HITCHCOCK'S  
MYSTERY  
MAGAZINE  
Box 1932  
MARION  
OH 43305**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (please print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



*It was January twenty-second, time for Ambledon to send another \$50,000 . . .*

# A PROPER ENVIRONMENT



by JAMES  
MCKIMMEY

Alan Ambledon sat at his massive oak desk watching the minute hand of the brass clock moving toward the hour. If Edward Harms were still alive the telephone would soon ring. Harms would be making his annual call to demand more money and to deliver the same threat he'd been making for the past seven years. And if Ambledon failed to send that money immediately, Harms would come to Ambledon's modern solar house on the edge of a small California Coast Range town and kill him.

The long hand reached twelve. The telephone rang.

Ambleton felt anger heating his face as he reached out and lifted the phone. He answered, "It's Harms, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," said a perpetually hoarse voice that always sounded as if it were coming from the bottom of a large empty metal container. "It's January twenty-second, time for you to mail another fifty thousand. This year send it to me in care of General Delivery, La Honda, California 94020."

Ambleton examined the items on the surface of his desk, feeling his heart beating rapidly. He fingered the intricate Eighteenth Century microscope wrought in solid brass. Also on the desk were twin cut-glass decanters, one filled with brandy, the other with Scotch. Next to the decanters was a quill pen resting in a brass holder with a matching inkwell beside it. Ambleton angrily lifted the lid and saw the well was dry. He'd had a devil of a time finding good black ink recently and had asked his eight-year-old son Kevin to look for some in town. Flipping the lid shut with a snap, he said, "What if I don't do it this year, Harms?"

"I thought I'd made that quite clear, sir," Harms said, as though he were still the servant he'd once been.

"I think I will disappoint you this time around," Ambleton said, the face above his full greying beard pink with emotion.

"Perhaps I should remind you again of seven years ago to the day, sir. When you crushed the head of Mrs. Ambleton with the brass candle holder."

Ambleton shut his eyes.

It had rained all morning. Small pools of fog had drifted inland from the ocean to hover over the pond near the house and gather in pockets in the bordering woods. Janice had come in from jogging, her old cotton warmup suit drenched with the damp so that she smelled like a wet sheep. Not remotely attractive, small and oddly muscular, her blonde hair plastered against her little head, she'd walked into Ambleton's study with a familiar look of contempt and accusation.

"Look at Ambleton sitting at his favorite occupation, doing nothing," she said.

"I'm thinking," he replied, trying to maintain his calm and dignity.

"With that?" she asked, picking up one of his decanters and removing the stopper.

Ambleton willed himself to silence. He was a self-educated environmental scientist who subscribed to the concept that major energy should be devoted to the original design of a system, not to the maintenance. Interested in planning self-contained agricultural ecologies, he stoutly believed that thinking, not doing, was the essential ingredient. And because he'd become resolutely convinced of this do-nothing philosophy, he'd married Janice for no other reason than the immense amount of wealth she'd inherited. When one did nothing, one seldom earned very much money. But at times, as on that particular day, there was hell to pay for the privilege of not working.

"The do-nothing wonder of the world!" She'd lifted the decanter and drunk straight from it. Then more words of disdain had poured from her mouth. She especially accused him of being incapable of an original thought. By the time she finished her attack she had not only drained the decanter but driven him into a greater fury than he'd ever before experienced.

And so he had stood, lifted a heavy Old World candle holder, and smashed it against her head.

She'd fallen heavily, blood spurting from her rain-soaked head, and lay in a dismal, crumpled heap.

Gradually Ambleton had regained his senses enough to realize that someone was standing at the doorway and witnessed the entire thing—Harms, the servant Janice had insisted they have in this country retreat.

Harms was a large, muscular man of middle age, his frightening appearance—his glistening shaved head—reminiscent of an ancient Tartar warrior. He was uncommonly strong—he could crack fire logs six inches in diameter in two. Furthermore, he had the unreasonable, deadly viciousness of a beast, a viciousness he'd demonstrated on the two occasions when the chicken coop had been raided, first by a fox, then by a coyote. Both times he had waited for the animal to attempt a second theft. Then, trapping the creature in the structure, he'd gone in after it and met it on its own terms, clubbing it senseless with his rocklike hands and tearing it apart with bloodthirsty brutality.

But on this rainy day, Ambleton having demonstrated his own animality by breaking his wife's head, Harms had remained calmly in control, saying capably and confidently in his rumbling voice, "The baby's asleep in his

room, sir. Why don't you go up to him while I take care of things? I assure you everything will be all right."

Afraid to do anything, Ambleton went to Kevin's room and sat beside the sleeping child to wait. A short while later Harms looked in to say, "I've telephoned the sheriff's office, sir. I told them I happened into the study where I observed Mrs. Ambleton struck down with a candle holder by a masked prowler who escaped through an open window and disappeared. The deputies should be here any minute."

Ambleton nodded, amazed. "Why are you doing this?"

"I wanted her silenced as much as you did," Harms replied calmly. "But I do expect to be properly reimbursed later. Meantime, shall we go back to the study and appear to be in grief? Your fingerprints are still on the candle holder. But why shouldn't they be? I've opened a window to substantiate the story I gave the authorities."

Ambleton's thoughts returned to the present as he sat at his desk, listening to Harms.

"Do I need to remind you how Mrs. Ambleton died seven years ago?"

"There's no way of proving it."

"That doesn't matter," Harms responded. "Because if you don't send the money, I will simply come to the house and kill you."

Ambleton's mind raced. He had access to as much money as he wanted. Not that Janice had left him anything of his own—he had, in fact, been required to sign away all common-property rights before they were married and she'd left her fortune entirely to Kevin, but with the stipulation that Ambleton be appointed the child's conservator until the boy came of legal age—and the court had given Ambleton freedom to spend whatever he wished as long as he recorded some broad and general reason for having done it.

So money was not as yet a problem and he could easily afford to give Harms another fifty thousand, writing it off vaguely to scientific research. And Harms knew that, which was why he hadn't asked for an astronomical amount at the start.

"You'd be in prison now if I hadn't done what I did," Harms said. "Moreover, I'm not raising my demands to meet the increasing cost of living, Mr. Ambleton. I'm being entirely reasonable. I would suggest you do the same."

Ambleton remained silent, thinking, as he had before, that perhaps he could get rid of Harms permanently.

He could go to the post office where he was directed to send the money, hide, wait for Harms to pick it up, then follow him and shoot him. But Harms chose a different address each year and it was always the post office of a very small town. Harms could observe a small postal building with ease. If he should find Ambleton in the vicinity, that would be the end of Ambleton, even if he were armed. Ambleton shuddered. The brute's method of murder would not be gentle or quick.

"Remove the cash from your bank directly," Harms ordered. "Package and address it as I've instructed and mail it today, Thursday. I'll expect it no later than next Wednesday. If it hasn't arrived by then, I'll come for you."

"That's allowing only six days for delivery!" Ambleton protested. "How can you have such faith in the mails?"

"It's only a short delivery from one California town to another. Nothing I've mailed has ever gone astray."

"But things do!" Ambleton argued. "It's unreasonable to think there couldn't be an error made somewhere along the line!"

"Pray that one isn't," Harms said and hung up.

Kevin came into the room, a boy with a round freckled face, as all-American as if he'd come to life from a Norman Rockwell painting. His blond hair and diminutive size were his mother's, but he'd inherited none of her meanness. He had an unswerving good nature, helping Ambleton with household chores with energy and no complaint. He demonstrated little interest in his morning school classes, but he was devoted to all forms of magic. He was on the list of at least a dozen magic shops that dealt in mail-order merchandising of tricks of every sort.

Ambleton had never discouraged his preoccupation with the hobby. Caring for Kevin in that fashion, Ambleton was certain, paved the way for Kevin taking care of Ambleton's financial needs once Kevin became legally responsible for the fortune his mother had left him. It also kept Kevin engaged and in good spirits. Ambleton would have preferred to have lived alone in this house which he had designed himself but since Kevin was a necessary companion Ambleton was grateful he was so little trouble.

Now Kevin held up two coins, his bright eyes twinkling, then gave

them to Ambleton, saying, "Put your hands behind your back, with the dime in one and the nickel in the other. But don't tell me which."

Ambleton nodded and moved his hands behind his back, placing the nickel in his right hand, the dime in his left.

"Now I'll tell you which coin is in which hand," Kevin said. "Multiply the value of the coin in your right hand by four, just in your mind."

"Done," Ambleton said, playing the game.

"Multiply the value of the coin in your left hand by seven."

"All right."

"Now add the two answers and tell me what it is."

"Ninety," answered Ambleton.

"The nickel's in your right hand, the dime's in your left," Kevin said triumphantly.

"Astonishing!" Ambleton exclaimed, bringing his hands forward to reveal that the boy was right. "How'd you do it?"

"It's simple, really. You gave me an even number, so the nickel had to be in your right hand. If you'd given me an odd number, it would have been in your left."

"Terrific!"

The boy nodded, but his smile vanished and Ambleton saw something in his clear blue eyes he'd never seen before. It was as though Kevin were staring at him with the purest hate. It gave him the same kind of chill he'd felt receiving Harms' call earlier. But then the look was gone and Kevin was smiling his all-American grin again, saying, "Neat, huh?"

"It's a great trick," Ambleton agreed, relieved. He couldn't afford to earn the boy's displeasure. He stood and moved to a wide plexiglass window angled to assist sunlight to penetrate deeply into the house. After Janice's death, he'd had the original house razed and had constructed this one in its place, a totally self-sufficient solar/earth-shelter home. He'd used the concepts of others to indicate to the architect what he wanted, but this particular assembly of ideas was entirely original and bore his own stamp.

South-facing walls were filled with water, catching and storing the warmth of the afternoon sun. A fireplace on the first floor heated a water-pipe grate that fed hot water into a large storage tank. Water from the pond could be pumped through interior radiators to cool the house on hot summer days. The innovations were endless. And Ambleton had

managed to have the whole thing built for the astonishingly low cost of just under a million dollars.

He looked down at the grounds where he'd had a chicken-heated greenhouse constructed to test the do-nothing system of farming he'd conceived some time ago.

A hen coop had been built cantilevered onto a greenhouse beside the pond. The nearby woods provided a forage for the chickens, now pecking at the ground there. In return, decomposition of chicken manure enriched the soil. Direct sunlight reflected off the pond, helping to heat the greenhouse during the day while the chickens' body heat served the same purpose at night.

It was, Ambleton mused, simply a matter of thinking through to the basic values of natural laws and putting those laws to work for you.

One of those laws, he'd long ago decided, was that the environment, by its very nature, sooner or later cast out that which was totally worthless.

This was the final reason, Ambleton thought, remembering Harms' call again, why Janice was no longer alive. Kevin might idealize her and consequently worship her in his memory because he couldn't remember the truly evil person his mother had really been. But it had been her evilness that had triggered her death.

"What are you going to do the rest of the afternoon?" Kevin asked him cheerfully. "Think about things?"

"That," Ambleton agreed. "And I've got to get to the bank." There was no sense fighting it—he was much too afraid of Harms. He would draw out the money and bring it back here, package it carefully, and make sure he addressed it properly—he would use the bold strokes he could achieve with his quill pen to insure absolute legibility of the address. "And," he added to Kevin, "I have to buy some ink."

"They said at the stationery store they'd have some in," Kevin told him. "I'll walk into town with you and get it while you're at the bank."

"I don't know what I'd do without you, Kevin," Ambleton said.

When they returned from town, Ambleton located a pasteboard box and sturdy brown wrapping paper in the first-floor storeroom where he kept such things. Returning to his study on the second floor, he saw from the window that Kevin was now in the woods, clapping his hands together to make the chickens fly up in the air, their wings flapping furiously. Checking the inkwell, he found it had been refilled.



He transferred the money from his briefcase to the box and taped and bound the box shut, then wrapped the box with several thicknesses of the paper, binding and taping it securely. Finally, he lifted the quill pen and with wide firm strokes addressed the package as Harms had ordered him to.

Returning to town, Ambleton went to the post office, where he oversaw the postal clerk as she applied the proper postage to the package and placed it in an outgoing mail-sack before he allowed himself to return home.

The following Wednesday finally came and went. When the sun rose on Thursday, Ambleton faced the new day with confidence and good spirits, certain that the package had been received.

With Kevin at school, Ambleton sat at his desk and took care of small matters. He wrote letters to two old friends and addressed the envelopes, his pen moving swiftly now that the pressure was gone. He then wrote a check, put it in an envelope, and addressed it to the magic shop where he'd established a charge account for Kevin's purchases. Stamping the envelopes, he placed them on a corner of his desk to mail later. By now it was nearly noon. He went down to the kitchen and made a sandwich with whole-grain bread, avocado, and alfalfa sprouts, and carried it outside to enjoy in the unusually warm winter sunshine.

He strolled to the pond and sat down on a tree stump to eat, letting his mind idle, the perfect way to begin a new trend of original thinking. Time passed.

He found himself looking at the chicken-heated greenhouse, remembering what Harms had done to the fox and the coyote. He would, he thought, collect his mail and walk to the post office.

Back in his office, he picked up the envelopes on his desk.

They were blank! All three were completely blank!

He tore them open. Two contained blank sheets of paper. The third held a check on which nothing was written.

Ambleton sat down hard as understanding developed. His hand shaking, he slid a fresh sheet of stationery in front of him. Taking the quill pen from the brass holder, he opened the lid of the inkwell and dipped the pen in the ink. "Now," he wrote, "is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party."

He returned the pen to its holder and stared at what he'd written.

Time passed slowly.

Then he could see, just perceptibly, that the ink he'd applied to the paper was beginning to disappear.

His heart hammered with fear.

"Sir?" Kevin piped as he entered the room. Ambleton sat frozen in shock. Kevin rounded the desk to look at his father with that same chilling look of hate his clear eyes had demonstrated days before. "Are you all right, sir? You're very pale."

"Disappearing ink!" Ambleton managed.

"It's clever, isn't it?" Kevin said. "In the well it looks like the real thing. But when it's removed by the pen and left on paper to dry, it fades away."

"Why?" Ambleton shouted. "Why did you do it?"

"After I heard the telephone ring last Thursday, I picked up the extension in the kitchen. But you were already answering. I heard your conversation with Harms."

The boy nodded.

"I know who he is. You've mentioned him. And now he's on his way up to kill you because he didn't get the money."

On his way up? Was Harms here? Was he already in the house?

"You shouldn't have killed my mother," Kevin said. "She was a wonderful woman."

"You've made her that in your mind!" Ambleton cried. "But she wasn't! She was evil! And worthless! That's what evil is—worthlessness! And a proper environment, by its very nature, sooner or later casts out of its existence that which is totally worthless!"

"Killer," Kevin said.

"If you'd only been old enough to know what she really was!"

"You didn't give me the chance," Kevin said coolly.

Behind Kevin as he spoke, Edward Harms appeared in the doorway, looking much as he had the day seven years ago when the boy had been asleep in his room.

"No!" Ambleton told him. "No no no no no!"

The December 9 issue of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* will be on sale November 12.

*It was time to get on a fast track . . .*

# THE PLOUGH HORSE

by  
**PAULINE  
C. SMITH**



"I've written a mystery story!" I told Latham.

He didn't bother to look up from his drawing board.

Latham had just bought the drawing board, sketching pad, and graph paper—with my money, of course, because he has none of his own. Latham likes to have nice things to work with. The best, actually, since he is very talented. Anything he does, therefore, is terribly important.

"A mystery story! How about that?" I cried in an attempt to elicit some interest.

He glanced up, momentarily, with a conciliatory smile, and went back to his important work.

Latham, my husband, is Latham Lawrence, scion of the Lawrence family, once eminent in this town—that's when there was a judge, doctor, artist, and crooked politician. Gone now, dead or scattered, with only Latham left, and Latham's greatness appears to be an erratic potential only.

"It's a pretty good story," I told him wistfully, laying a gently pleading hand on his shoulder. "Would you care to read it?"

He shrugged the hand off impatiently. "I'm busy," he said, turning his lensed eyes wearily ceilingward.

Latham has always worn glasses. It's the thing, he says, along with his small—but wiry—frame that kept him on the scrub team in high school. He watches national football games on television now and it's the only time he gets mad—emotionally irked, I mean. He tells me all the winning games he could have racked up for our local high school if only Coach Meyers had let him in to play. He remembers every incomplete pass and each fumble made during all the time he warmed the bench, then he cries out, his face livid, "The coach grandstanded all the stupid, beefy ones with 20-20 vision and left me out!"

Latham's irascible regret through each TV football season is pitiful, especially since high school was ten years ago, and who cares or remembers? Well, Latham cares fanatically and remembers on the bias, just as he does his short-term college career. He says it was short because he wanted to come back home and take care of his old grandfather. Perhaps. But watching Latham through our marital years, I'm inclined to believe he didn't finish college for the same reasons he doesn't finish anything.

"Latham," I said, "why don't you read my story? I bet if you just start it you'll want to read it through to the end."

He smiled again, deprecatingly. He had weighty things on his mind.

Well, Latham always was pretty heavy—way back in high school he had a casually contemptuous air about him that betokened a big brain and a solid family name, either of which was enough to add to my own sense of inferiority, not knowing whether I had inherited any sense at all and having no name I could call my own.

To compensate, I studied the dictionary. At my last foster home,

Mother Mary, as she instructed me to call her, admonished me for it. "Why the dictionary?" she asked with contempt. "What do you get from the dictionary except a bunch of words?" She was right. But words are an education, aren't they? And background?

Take the word "egalitarian," which means: *Of, or relating to, or believing in social equality*, which, if you know its definition, certainly puts you on a one-upmanship level, doesn't it? So I continued to study the dictionary and built up a respectable vocabulary.

Not that I believe my wordy erudition is what caught Latham. I think I was at the right place and had a job when his grandfather died of old age and left him alone in this falling-down house.

I leaned a chin on his shoulder to see what he was working on. He shrugged it off. The sketch, carefully in detail, seemed to be the basement stairs again. Every now and then he went back to those stairs—widening them, broadening the treads—they were beautiful sketches. Once he even designed a circular stairway down into the basement, with a central pole like firemen use. "Oh, my!" I said, quite overcome with his creative genius, adding, "Why don't you just repair the stairs?" Goodness knows they were worth his life and limb, dangerously rickety as they were, and with him descending them all the time to dig a little bit more of that hole he was preparing for the oven.

Latham's way, however, was never simply to repair but to design an entirely new concept, such as the stairs and the oven—the oven to be a kiln so he could fire clay objects, statues he might sculpt, puppet heads.

Also I asked, with hesitation, why he didn't dig the hole someplace other than smack at the foot of the stairs where he had to swing around the banister when coming and going.

Because, he explained, it was the only spot in the basement floor where he hadn't hit a layer of shale—and, anyway, the new stairs were to be placed at an angle. He had an answer for everything when he would deign to give it.

Latham had multiple, somewhat capricious talents that took him into many fields of endeavor, and down in the basement he hung several half-strung, headless puppets as well as miniature, partially operable inventive prototypes. "Why don't you finish some of those things?" I tentatively suggested, a hand on his shoulder.

"I will," he answered, shrugging me off, "when the time is right and I can afford more material."

Well, it was I who had to buy the material. Little gears and nuts and bolts and miniature motors are expensive. So, in these inflationary times, are shovels, wood, clay, and even the paper Latham used to draw his plans.

When I suggested he get a job you'd have thought I was advising him to stand on the corner of Main and Third and peddle his body.

"Me? Work a nine-to-five slave schedule?" He was appalled.

"Well, I do," I reminded him. "I work at Herzog's Variety Store from ten to six every day."

And what was his answer to that? "I am the race horse and you are the plough horse," he said with a patronizing smile. I considered his metaphor a particularly low type of anthropomorphization, with the smile an added insult.

"Won't you just try and read my mystery story, Latham?" I appealed, my hand on his arm.

"Later, later," he said with an impatient shrug, and drew another tread on his drawing paper.

I wouldn't have had the inspiration to become a writer in the first place except for that race horse-plough horse bit, which caused me to sink deeper into my furrow of inferiority and come up with the desire to get on a fast track. I remembered my remarkable vocabulary, the confession magazines on the rack at the variety store where I worked, and the old typewriter at home, undoubtedly left behind by some great Lawrence who had passed this way.

So during the lulls at the store I read stories from the magazines in the rack and once the dishes were done at night I set the typewriter on the kitchen table and wrote. After finishing my first story, I looked in the front of one of the magazines to find out where to send it.

All this time, Latham was drawing, stringing puppets, digging the basement floor, and fitting pieces of metal together without asking me once, either by word, raised eyebrow, or interruptive cough what I might be about.

The check came on a Monday, my day off, while Latham was at the library. I sank limply into a chair, holding it and the letter that came with it, feeling the wind in my mane and a ribbon on my chest. I was still there when Latham arrived home loaded with handicraft books. He took

the check from my hand and read it, his eyes glinting glassily as visions of clay and drawing paper danced in his head.

"Where'd you get this?" he asked.

"It's for a story I sold."

"Let's see it," he said. I asked him how I could let him see it when the magazine had it.

"You didn't keep a carbon?" he asked with stunned surprise. "Well, you blew it," he said, sitting down to write an itemized list of the material he needed for some of his unfinished projects. It wasn't until later that I reasoned I couldn't have blown it all that much or they wouldn't have accepted the story—would they? Or paid for it—right?

The carbons began to pile up on the kitchen sink, but Latham never asked, after that first magic moment, to see one of my stories. Just as when the stories began to appear in print, he refused to read a single word.

"Where's your name?" he asked.

"They don't give the names of writers in confession magazines," I explained.

He laughed, tossed the story aside, and said he never in his life had read a confession story and wasn't about to start now.

I thought later how I should have reminded him that he showed no such compunction when it came to spending the checks the confession magazines sent—but then I always think of things to say to Latham long after the proper time to say them. I talk better on paper, when my mind isn't confused with my own inferiority and rattled by Latham's supremacy.

"It's the first mystery story I ever wrote, Latham," I said. "I worked very hard on it and planned each detail. Just like you do things, Latham—meticulously. I went down to the library, and in the periodical room where you get your *99 IC Projects* and your *Science & Mechanics* magazines I found a mystery magazine to send it to." I placed a hand around his waist and he gave it back to me, leaning back in his chair with half-closed eyes.

His eyes, once I really noticed them and thought about it, were like little pig eyes, magnified hugely through the thickness of his glasses. "I'd like you to read it, Latham—I really would."

He breathed deeply and rose, this being the signal that he was about



to escape my entreaties by taking himself off to the basement where he could dig and commune uninterruptedly with his own remarkable genius.

"Please, won't you read it?" I begged.

He smiled with his thin lips, but not with his magnified eyes, and said, "All right, but later."

"I bet you won't," I answered, following him, "but you should."

He opened the basement door and turned to look distantly upon me.

"You really should, Latham," I said, placing a pleading hand on his shoulder.

He pulled away—and plunged down the stairs.

He should have read the story. He really should. But that's Latham for you. Or, rather, that *was* Latham.

I leaned against the side of the open basement door and reread the final paragraph of my story:

*He regarded a hand on the shoulder as patronizing—as an attention-getter, to draw his mind from his own interests to someone else's, so he always shrugged or pulled away—a gesture that was to be his undoing at the top of the rickety basement stairs where the off-balance movement caused him to fall to his death into a half-dug hole bristling with jagged shale.*

He should have read the story.

He certainly should.



*Brenda's mother needed a lawyer . . .*

# THE CUSTODY THING

by  
**MICHAEL  
SCOTT  
CAIN**



**W**hen Brenda knocked at my door, I was flipping cards into a trash can twenty feet away. I opened the door for her and she took a look at the cards strewn all over the floor, saw the rest of the deck in my hand, and said, "Between jobs again, Mr. Mason?"

I'd taught her the euphemism—I didn't like to hear her referring to me as out of work.

"Things could be moving a little more quickly for me," I said. "What's up, Brenda?"

She set her bookbag down on my desk. "Is my mommy over here?"

"I haven't seen her. But I was out most of the morning. Isn't she at your place?"

Brenda gave me a look that must shame every boy in her fourth-grade class. "If she was at home, would I be looking for her over here?"

"There's no need to get smart about it, kid. What's the matter? Are you locked out?"

"Yeah."

"Want to hang out here till she gets back?" I flipped the ten of spades. It hit the edge of the trash can and dropped to the floor.

She smoothed her hair back with her hand, a gesture I'd seen her mother perform hundreds of times. "Good try," she said. "Look, I've got to get into the apartment. Can you open the door?"

"I don't have a key to your place."

"Can't you do one of those detective things?"

"Brenda, the detective thing you're talking about is called breaking-and-entering. It's against the law."

"But you could do it if you wanted to, couldn't you?"

I liked Brenda. She and her mother had been living across the hall from me for about six months. When I was "between jobs," Brenda and I spent a lot of time together. I'd help her with her homework in the afternoons and we often just hung out talking on long weekend days. She was lonely and seemed to need some adult male company. I needed to have someone bright and cheerful around me.

"I could, but it's still against the law," I told her.

"I live there and if I say it's all right it's all right. If you've got permission, it's not against the law. So come on, let's do it. Let me see you spring that lock."

"Quit talking like *The Rockford Files*."

"Then get me into the apartment."

I flipped the deuce of hearts. Bull's-eye. Knowing I'd never top it I said, "Let's give it a try then."

I'm no pro at lockpicking, but these apartments are made of starched cardboard so it took only a couple of tries with a credit card to spring the door. As she stepped inside, I reminded myself to install better locks on Brenda's door—and my own.

"You do that real good," she said.

"Listen, if she doesn't get home pretty soon, come back over to my place."

"I'll be fine."

"I don't like the idea of you being here by yourself," I said. "Leave your door open and I'll leave mine open. That way we can hear each other."

She fumed. "Come on, Tim. I'm ten years old."

"You'll be ten this summer. Leave the door open."

She pretended to be angry but I could see she was relieved to know I'd be around. At the same time, though, she enjoyed the idea of being by herself in the apartment. She hummed a snatch of tune as she walked into her room. I went back across the hall to wait for the phone to ring.

Brenda's phone rang first. I didn't pay any attention, but with the doors open I could hear her answer it, speaking softly. Then her voice rose. It broke with emotion and I was on my way to see what was wrong when she came to my door. She was crying.

"Tim," she sobbed, "my mommy's in jail!"

"Lieutenant," I said, "I'm a friend of Marlene Heller. This is her daughter." I placed my hand on Brenda's shoulder. "Can you tell us what's going on here?"

"What's going on here is that you're talking to a captain, not a lieutenant. My name is Guild and everybody calls me Lieutenant. You know why that is?"

Brenda and I exchanged looks. "No," I said.

Guild was a beefy man with heavy eyebrows that met in the middle. His hands were thick and muscular. I figured he started off each day by crushing a few beer cans.

"Because everybody's a lieutenant on TV. It gets to where anybody sees a plainclothes cop they figure he's a lieutenant."

"O.K., Captain. Now can you tell us what's going on?"

"What for? You said you're a friend. We don't normally confide in friends." He scowled at Brenda. "Or children."

I handed him a card. I was still new enough to the business to feel silly doing it. "I'm a detective, if that makes any difference."

"It doesn't." He read my card. "T. Mason and Associates."

"You don't have any associates," Brenda said.

"I think big."

"My God, a real-life private eye," Captain Guild said. "I don't believe it." He lifted his eyebrows at me.

I fought it but wound up blushing anyway. "Come on, Captain—"

"You know, I've been on this force for seventeen years and you're the first person that ever came in here claiming to be a private eye. It's like watching a TV show come to life or something—like running into Mannix."

"He's been cancelled."

"I try to catch the reruns. Always good for a laugh or two. I love it when Mannix comes in and shows the cops how to run a precinct house. So, hotshot, are you investigating this?"

"I'm working for the girl here."

This time the eyebrows were raised at Brenda. "You went and hired yourself a detective?"

"He's really good at it."

He shook his head. "It's enough to make you nostalgic for *Gangbusters*. O.K., kid, wait outside."

"What for?"

"Because I'm going to give the hotshot here some bad news and I don't want you hearing it."

"If it's about my mommy I want to hear it."

"Wait outside," Guild said again.

I said, "Captain, I'll just tell her as soon as we leave here, you know."

"Fine. As long as I don't have to."

I told Brenda to go on out into the hall.

When the door closed behind her Guild shook his head. "That girl made a mistake hiring a private eye. But I guess a lawyer's out of her range."

"What do you mean?"

"A lawyer's what she needs. Her mother just wasted her ex-husband."

Marlene and Frank, her ex-husband, had broken up about six months earlier—that was when she'd moved in across the hall from me. The split had been rough on her. It still was, in fact. If they gave awards for poor adjustment, she'd have won first prize. For the first month or so she spent most of her time in bed, crying. When she got beyond that she came out into the living room, turned on the TV, and cried. But recently she'd started pulling herself together. She'd gotten a job and, since she was out moving around and interacting with people, she seemed happier.

She was still suspicious and distrustful of men, an attitude I felt was basically healthy unless carried to the extremes that she took it to. But maybe she wasn't being extremist at all. As soon as she started pulling herself together, Frank decided he wanted custody of Brenda. There were suits, countersuits, accusations, and counteraccusations. It got pretty nasty. Until, according to the captain, some time last night she'd gone to Frank's place, argued with him; and shot him to death. They'd arrested her this morning.

"I don't believe she did that," I said.

"Believe it. We've got witnesses. She was seen going in and coming out. Neighbors overheard the argument."

"O.K. She was there. That doesn't mean she killed him."

"No wonder you get hired by little kids. She gave us the package: motive, opportunity, and physical presence. What else do we need?"

"What does she say?"

"The usual. She was there but she didn't kill him."

"It could be true."

"Sure. And you could be Mannix."

"Brenda, you've got to go to your grandmother's."

"I don't like her. Why can't I stay home?"

"Because you're nine years-old."

"Nine and a half."

"Yeah, well, that still puts you a few years short of the minimum age for staying alone all night."

"I'll spend the night with you."

"You can't. I won't be there."

"Why not?"

"Your mother's bail hearing is in the morning. She's going to need a good lawyer. And if I can't find out what really happened last night she's going to need an even better lawyer. So I've got to hit the streets, and I can't be worrying about you being home by yourself."

"I'll go with you then."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know where I'll be. Sometimes I have to go to some unpleasant places and talk to some unpleasant people. Look, stay at your grandmother's and I'll pick you up when I get through."

"Promise you'll pick me up?"

"I promise."

The word grandmother carries a set of expectations with it. You think of little old ladies with crochet patterns or knitting needles. This woman shattered the image. As she let us into the house, I decided she must have had her first child when she was Brenda's age. Though she had to be in her forties, nobody would peg her for over thirty. She had short curly brown hair and filled out her designer jeans so well I thought a TV commercial had come to life before my eyes. She knew what she looked like and had enough confidence in herself to take it for granted. I couldn't picture her with two grown daughters.

"I'm Mona Garfield," she said. "Call me Mona."

I felt like one of the privileged. I told her what had happened and added, "So you don't mind watching Brenda for a while?"

She shook her head in disbelief. "Marlene's not a murderer."

"She didn't do anything," Brenda said.

"I know, honey." She touched Brenda's cheek. I could see Brenda fighting to keep from pulling away. "She can stay for as long as it takes, Mr. Mason."

"Good.. Listen, maybe you can help me get started. The best way to prove Brenda didn't do it is to find out who did. And the fact is he opened the door willingly to whoever—" I glanced at Brenda and changed the way I was going to phrase the sentence "—did this. Can you think of anybody he knew who might have had a reason to do it?"

"No," she said. "I wish I could but I can't."

"How well did you know him?"

"Not well at all. Well enough to try to talk my daughter out of marrying him, if that's what you mean, but other than that—"

A younger version of Marlene came in, startling me for a moment. Looking at her across the room I thought I was seeing Marlene.

"What's going on?" she said. "I thought I heard people out here. Hi, Brenda."

"Mr. Mason, this is my daughter Rebecca."

I said hello. Rebecca took us all in and said, "What's going on here?"

"Marlene's been accused of killing Frank, dear. Mr. Mason here—"

The girl's eyes widened. Her hand flew to her mouth and she cried out, "Oh, my God, you mean Frank's dead?"

"Yes, dear, he—"

"Not Frank! He can't be dead! He—"

As Mona Garfield went to comfort her daughter, Brenda screamed. I grabbed her and she clung to me, crying, "My daddy's dead! My daddy's dead!"

I ordered a beer and let my eyes get accustomed to the bar's dim light. It was a neighborhood place with delusions of class; they'd stuck a couple of fake Tiffany lamps in the corners, built a tiny stage for the band that played on weekends, and called it a club. Evidently it worked. For thirty on a Tuesday night quite a few people were there.

After we'd gotten Brenda calmed down, Rebecca had told me Frank hung out here a lot. I had to start somewhere, so after I called a lawyer I work for now and then and arranged for him to represent Marlene in the morning, I came here.

I sipped my beer, thinking of all the movies and paperbacks and pulp magazines that had made me decide I wanted to live my own life of fiction by being a private eye. But even if it was silly and childish, I'd bought into it too much and too deeply to think about giving it up. I took out the picture of Frank Heller that I'd gone back to Marlene's apartment to get and decided to go to work.

"Yeah," a guy said, "I know him. He's in and out of here all the time. Hey, Joanne," he called out, "didn't you go out with this guy once?"

"Will you keep it quiet?" Joanne was just marginally old enough to be in here. She had light hair, done up in a style I recognized from some *Charlie's Angels* episodes. "Let me see that picture."

I handed it to her.

"That's Frank Heller," she said. "I wouldn't go out with him for anything. That guy gives me the creeps."

"Why's that?"

"Because he is a creep, that's why."

"Was he in here last night?"

She thought about it. "Yeah. He came over and hit on me like he always does. I turned him off and left to go to a movie."

The bartender knew Frank Heller too, but he'd been off the night before. "Why should I bore myself to death all alone in here when I can be home watching football on the tube?" he said.

"Who was working last night?" I asked him.



"John Stoddard. He's the relief man. He floats."

"He does what?"

"Floats. Doesn't have a regular job—just fills in different places. Relief work, you know? So the regular guys can get a night off. He's a floater."

"Have you got a phone number for him?"

"Sure." He ran his finger down a list on the cash register, found Stoddard's name, and wrote out his address and phone number for me. "You won't catch him at home tonight though. If he isn't working a bar he'll be doing a private party. The guy does better without a steady job than I do with one."

Nobody in the bar remembered seeing Heller leave, either alone or with anyone, the night before so it looked like Stoddard was my best shot. I dialed his number and my best shot misfired: he wasn't home. It would have to be morning then.

As I pulled out of the parking lot, somebody shot my rear window out. Glass splattered all over the back seat. Instinctively I floored the car and pulled off in a flurry of burning rubber.

I kept the pedal against the floorboard until I'd picked Brenda up and had us both safely home. As I put Brenda down in my bed and made up the couch for myself, I felt better—Marlene Heller looked less like a murderer now. Somebody had taken a shot at me to keep me from finding out who was better suited for the role.

Brenda didn't want to go to school. I told her it was either school or her grandmother's house again and she grumbled but decided school was less painful.

When I dropped her off I drove to the courthouse, where Marlene and I were joined by Warren Wright, the lawyer I'd called. We sat in a jury room waiting for her bond hearing.

"I didn't do it," Marlene said. "What do I need bond for?"

"The cops think they have a good case on you. You were there the night he was killed."

"But I didn't kill him."

"Hurry it up, will you, Tim?" Wright said. "I need time with my client."

"Marlene, I need to know anything you can tell me. Anybody or any reason that could cause Frank's death."

She tried to smile. "You sound desperate."

"I don't have a lot to go on."

"He has a new girl friend, I know that, but I don't know who she was. He was really secretive about it, you know? Because of the custody thing."

"But he did have somebody he was serious about?"

"I don't know how serious it was. He used to call me and tell me how wonderful she was, all the things she did for him." She bit her lip. "He thought he was tormenting me, the way he talked."

Wright and I exchanged glances. Judging from the way *she* talked, we both figured Frank *was* tormenting her.

"Marlene, the cops figure you did it because he wanted custody or maybe out of frustration or something. If you did—"

"I didn't, Tim. Really. Look, he didn't really want custody. He was just trying to get back at me. He was a monster. He didn't care any more about Brenda than he did about me. He just wanted me to suffer some more, to try to take Brenda away from me because I wouldn't let him see her."

"You wouldn't let him see her?" Wright said. "Wasn't there an agreement?"

"He carried on when she was there. Drinking, drugs, women, everything. I didn't want her in an environment like that."

"Did you talk to him about it? Petition the court or anything? He'd have probably agreed to stop. Especially if it meant losing visitation rights if he didn't."

"I didn't talk to him," she said angrily. "Why should I have negotiated with that monster? I just refused to let Brenda have anything to do with him." She smiled. "It worked too. He was furious. That's when he started the custody threats. But he didn't scare me. I knew he couldn't get custody. He didn't deserve to have Brenda near him. Why should I share my daughter with a monster like him?"

"I think she's guilty as hell," Wright said out in the hall. "Look, Tim, I'll handle bail, but you'd better start thinking of another trial lawyer."

"I still don't think she did it." I told him about somebody taking a shot at me last night.

"Tim, you're in a redneck bar and some dude's showing off his new gun and takes a shot in the parking lot. It happens every day."

"I don't think she did it," I insisted.

"Grow up. You can't be an adolescent all your life." He shook his head. "God, the things people do to their kids. I see it all the time. They claim

to love them, to want to protect them, and then they do all kinds of horrible things. They wreck their lives in the name of love.”

The floating bartender wore a jogging suit. He was coming out as I went up to his door. When I told him what I wanted, he shook his head.

“Nope,” he said. “You want to talk to me you got to run with me. This is my exercise time.”

I hadn’t run a block without somebody chasing me since I was in high school, but I fell in beside him. After about fifty yards I found myself having a hard time asking questions—I couldn’t catch my breath. He ran smoothly and looked like he could go forever. The sweatshirt lettered “New York Marathon” reinforced that look.

“Sure I know Frank Heller,” he said. “He in trouble?”

“Somebody killed him. Monday night.”

“Somebody pulled old Frank’s plug, huh?”

“Yeah,” I sobbed. “You were at the Golden Tree Monday?”

“That’s my night there. Yeah, I saw Heller there if that’s what you’re getting at.”

“Did you see who he left with?”

“Couldn’t miss it. Great big foxy blonde.”

The new girl friend, maybe. “Recognize her?” My lungs heaved and my side hurt.

“Never saw her before. She was classy though, too classy for a dump like the Golden Tree. Man, that was one uptown lady. Great dress, fur coat—I remember wondering where a guy like Heller met a chick like that. I mean, she wasn’t no pickup. And Heller wasn’t exactly Cary Grant, you know?”

“Wait a minute. He didn’t meet her in the bar?”

“No, she came in, walked right over to him like she’d been looking for him, and he paid up his tab and they left.”

Brenda looked different when she came out of school. Or maybe I was seeing her differently. I remembered Wright’s words as she walked over to the car.

“Hi, Tim.” She slammed the door and rolled down the window. Though she was close to tears she faked a smile.

“Pretty rough in there?”

"Everybody wanted to know all about it. They acted like I was famous or something."

"I shouldn't have made you go. I'm sorry."

"Why can't they just leave me alone?"

"Look, Brenda," I said. "I've got some stops to make this afternoon. Will you be all right at my place by yourself?"

"I don't have to go to my grandmother's?"

"It's daytime. You'll be O.K. by yourself. If you feel up to it?"

"Can I watch TV?"

"Sure."

This time she managed to smile. "I'll be fine then."

"Mr. Mason," Mona Garfield said. "Come in."

"Thanks, Mrs. Garfield."

"I thought I told you to call me Mona." She waved me to a place on the couch and sat in a velvet chair opposite me. "After all, my daughter's friends are my friends."

"Mona," I said, sitting, "you killed your son-in-law."

She widened her eyes. "Really, Tim, aren't you being just a bit silly?"

"And you took a shot at me last night."

"Mr. Mason, if you don't stop this I'm going to ask you to leave."

"According to Marlene, Frank had a new girl friend."

"So?"

"And according to the bartender, he left the Golden Tree with a beautiful woman."

"The new girl friend?"

"I figured it that way at first, but now I don't think so. When I was here the other night Rebecca was really upset at Frank's death."

"They were always friendly."

"More than that. She was the new girl friend, wasn't she?"

"Rebecca with a man like Frank? Really—"

"She told me he hung out at the Golden Tree. You heard her say that. It would be a simple enough thing for you to follow me there and try to kill me when I came out."

"Mr. Mason, if I wanted you dead you'd be dead. I'm an excellent shot."

"But if you wanted to warn me, you'd blow my back window out, wouldn't you? Is Rebecca at home, Mrs. Garfield?"

"She's at work." A touch of a smile crossed her lips.

"It doesn't matter. The police can talk to her later. Can I see your blonde wig?"

"What on earth for?"

"The bartender said the woman Frank Heller left with was a blonde. I'm willing to bet if I went into your bedroom I'd find a blonde wig. The one you wore when you picked up Frank Heller, went with him to his apartment, and killed him. What did you do, wait in the bedroom for Marlene to leave and then kill him?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You warned him to leave Rebecca alone. He refused, so you killed him."

She began to argue, then shrugged and said, "You're really quite clever, Mason. You're right. You know the shape Marlene is in right now, and since she lives next door to you you must have noticed the shape she was in right after the breakup." She spoke thoughtfully. "Do you think I'd let that insect do that to both of my daughters? Simply because Rebecca is young and foolish do you think I'd let him destroy her too?"

"Mrs. Garfield, you killed a man."

"It was amazingly easy. I felt no more remorse or guilt than you do when you swat a fly." Her eyes were bright. "You simply open a hole in the body and all the life flows out."

"This is a human being we're talking about."

"An insect. I told him to leave my daughter alone and he laughed at me. He said terrible things to me. When she said those things to me I could hear him saying them to my daughters. He intended to ruin Rebecca to get back at Marlene. Does that sound like a human being to you?"

"You killed a man. That's all I know."

"I wouldn't have let Marlene go to jail for it. I don't want to go to jail just for stepping on an insect, but I will if it'll help my daughters. Do you have any children, Mason?"

"No."

"If you did, you'd understand. I assure you that if someone did to your children what that insect did to mine, you'd do exactly what I did."

As I drove Brenda to pick up her mother, she seemed bright and happy, chattering to me about how great everything would be from now on, but

then she looked away and became silent. I knew she was thinking about her father.

I reached out and touched her shoulder and she flashed me a smile that made me wish I had children of my own. But even as I wished it I wondered. I wondered what I'd do, how I'd manage as a parent. Would I hurt my children the way Marlene and Frank had hurt this one, the way Mona Garfield had hurt hers? And I wondered what kind of a mother Brenda herself was going to make.



**NEW  
FROM  
DAVIS!**

**CRIME**  
DIGEST

**Subscribe  
Now at Low  
Charter Rates**

**YES! Enter my CHARTER SUBSCRIPTION to *Crime Digest*.**  
(I am guaranteed the most favorable rates for as long as my subscription continues)

☐ **Bill Me**

6 issues (one year) for \$7.97 (I save \$3.73 off the regular subscription rate.)

Outside U.S.A. &  
Possessions: add  
\$1.75

☐ **Payment Enclosed**

7 issues for \$7.97 (I get one bonus issue—a total savings of \$5.68.)

Name

Address

City

State  ZIP

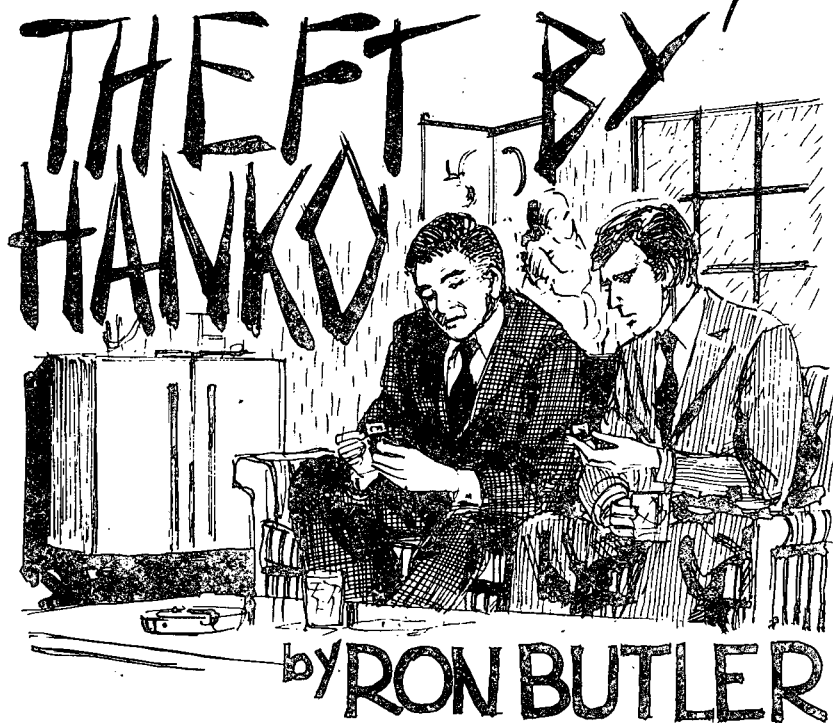
Send to:

**CRIME DIGEST • Box 1938 • Marion, Ohio 43305**

Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue

**D1MK9-8**

*Someone had used the Mayor's hanko for his own gain . . .*



All of the old gods of Japan seemed angry. Torrential rains driven by typhoon-strength winds completely obscured the mountains a mile to the north, and minutes before the sharp jolt of an earthquake had put a new crack in one of the house walls.

Noriko, my lovely wife with the soft deerlike eyes, was indifferent to both the downpour and the loud complaints of the shifting earth, having become well accustomed to both during her life. I was nervous, pacing

the straw-mat floors and wandering about the house, when the telephone provided a welcome distraction.

It was Police Inspector Toshiko Ueki, Noriko's father and my closest friend. "Sam, I am sorry to disturb you, but Mayor Kawahara has asked if both of us would go to his home. He appears to be upset."

My curiosity was piqued. Yukuo Kawahara was one of the most serene men I had ever met, a calmly practical man who also possessed a sharp sense of aesthetics.

"Shall I take my car, Toshiko, or do you feel like driving?" Navigating a car through the narrow, winding back streets of Okayama was never easy for me, even during good weather.

"Please allow me to drive, Sam."

I told Noriko where I was going and stepped down into the entranceway, slipping into my getas, the high wooden clogs so useful in rainy weather. Ueki arrived a few minutes later. I closed the sliding glass door behind me and entered his car.

"Maybe we should walk," I suggested. The river in front of our house had spilled over its banks onto the road.

"Trust me," Ueki said. "I have driven in more severe weather than this."

It took us thirty minutes to drive two kilometers.

Mayor Kawahara's house was the most imposing in the Tsushima District. It had been built halfway up a mountain and was surrounded by terraced gardens and two smaller houses for the Mayor's son and daughter and their families.

Mrs. Kawahara, a petite woman in her early sixties, greeted us at the entranceway, bowing deeply and placing house slippers before us.

She led us to the Mayor's study. Kawahara, telephone in hand, waved us to a sofa and gestured toward the bottles, glasses, and ice bucket set out on a table. He scribbled a few notes on a piece of paper, then hung up the phone.

"Ah, Mr. Brent, Inspector Ueki. It is very kind of you to come out on such a day. I fear I may need your help."

"How may we be of service?" the Inspector asked.

Kawahara poured himself a light drink. "I regret to say that a rather large amount of money has been removed from my bank account by



dishonest means. It would appear that someone has used my hanko for his own gain."

The Inspector and I looked at each other, startled. A hanko is a carved seal, used on an everyday basis instead of personal signatures in official and business transactions. The Chinese-style characters representing a person's name are carved in wood or ivory and the seal is carried in a small case containing an ink pad, the case fitting conveniently into a pocket or purse.

Ueki sampled his drink. "Kawahara-san, it will help if you will give me all of the details."

"Certainly. This morning I received a call from the manager of my bank. He told me that a large withdrawal had almost depleted my account, and he was concerned because there were a number of bills to be paid, including those from the electric and telephone companies. Naturally, I was surprised. I asked the manager how much had been withdrawn and he told me it was a little more than three million yen. He also said that someone identifying himself as me had called earlier to see if I had that much in my account."

It amounted to almost eleven thousand dollars. I freshened the Mayor's drink. "Kawahara-san, did any of the bank clerks remember who used your hanko?"

He smiled ruefully. "Yes, Mr. Brent. The young lady who handled the transaction said it was a man about fifty years old. She assumed that he was one of my staff at City Hall."

The practice of lending your hanko to a friend or associate for making deposits or withdrawals is fairly common, as is a request for large amounts of cash in a country where checking accounts are still a novelty.

Ueki stood up and walked to a window, watching the rain splatter on the patio. "I am sure that you have checked to see that you have not lost your hanko."

The Mayor opened a desk drawer and removed two of the signets. The larger one was a private seal; the smaller one was his registered, legal seal—the one needed for bank transactions. "Both are here. My wife has her own hankos, and I fail to see how mine could have been removed from the house and then returned without my knowledge."

"As it is late in the day," Ueki said, "all of the banks are closed. However, in the morning I will begin my investigation. In the meanwhile, may I borrow your registered hanko? I will be very careful with it."

The Mayor laughed. "No matter. There is no money in the bank."

"Do you mind if I accompany the Inspector?" I asked. "I have a few days of vacation left and Noriko says I'm beginning to get in her way around the house."

"I had hoped that you would accompany the Inspector, Mr. Brent. In the past, the two of you have worked well together."

In the morning a pretty young clerk took us to the office of Uchida-san, the manager of Kawahara's bank. We bowed to each other and he called for his secretary to bring us o-cha, green tea.

Ueki crossed his legs and lit a cigarette. "You already know the circumstances of my inquiry, Uchida-san. I would like to see the withdrawal slip in question."

Uchida nodded and opened a folder on his desk. "I have it here for you, Inspector." He handed over a slip of paper.

Ueki took the Mayor's hanko from his pocket, inked it, and impressed the seal on a piece of memo paper. He then compared the two impressions and handed them to Uchida. "What do you think?"

The bank manager adjusted his eyeglasses and peered closely. "They look the same to me, of course."

"What do you think, Sam?" Ueki passed the two pieces of paper to me. I studied them closely. "I don't think they're the same, Toshiko." I pointed to the bottom of one of the characters on the impression made on the withdrawal slip. "There's a small break in the curve of this character. On Kawahara-san's hanko, the curve is unbroken."

"Exactly," Ueki beamed.

"Wakarimasen," Uchida said. I don't understand.

Ueki finished his tea. "The two hanko impressions are very similar, true. But there are minor differences which indicate that a duplicate hanko was used."

Uchida drew his breath in sharply. "Inspector Ueki, this is a very serious matter. And I truly regret that a distinguished guest in Okayama like Mr. Brent should have to witness such dishonesty." I understood. A man's hanko is more than a means of conducting business; it represents his integrity and his honor.

Ueki replaced Kawahara's hanko in his pocket. "We will continue the investigation, Uchida-san. I would advise you to require identification of all persons making withdrawals unless your clerks know them by sight."

The manager stood up. "Hai, domo arigato." Yes, thank you very much. Ueki pocketed a box of courtesy matches on our way out and we returned to his car.

"Where are we going?" I asked as the Inspector weaved his car through the downtown traffic.

"I must stop to make a telephone call, and we also have time for lunch, Sam. Today is my treat."

"Are you going to call the Mayor?"

"Yes. He surely will know where his hanko was made and that is the logical place to look next. By law, his hanko must be registered and there will be a record of it at the shop."

The Inspector drove down a ramp leading into the underground parking lot near the Okayama Station. We walked up a flight of stairs to a below-ground mall and I saw our destination, a shop famous for unagi—eel. We ordered and Ueki went to a pay telephone, despositing a ten-yen coin. I watched him jot something down on his memo pad before returning to the table.

"Any problems?"

"Ie." No. "Kawahara-san gave me the name of the place where his hanko was made. It is somewhere near the Sanwa Bank."

A serving woman brought our broiled eel and rice. When we finished, Ueki paid the bill and we went to get the car.

The Inspector pulled into an empty space by a parking meter in front of the bank and we walked down an alley leading to another huge shopping mall. Not far from the Tenmaya Department Store we came to an intersection, and Ueki turned to the right. We entered a maze of narrow unmarked streets, but the Inspector seemed to know the way and we soon stood in front of a shop where hankos were made.

The interior was dimly lit by a single flickering fluorescent tube on the ceiling. Behind the counter we saw an old woman with grey hair and a wrinkled face. She was turning the pages of a ledger filled with hanko impressions.

Ueki went to the counter. "O-negai shimasu." It means "pretty please," and one says it to get a clerk's attention.

The old woman closed the ledger. "Hai, sumimasen." Yes, excuse me.

Ueki showed her his identification, but her attention was riveted on me. I might have been the first foreigner ever to enter the shop.

"What I want," the Inspector said, "is to see the record of Yukuo Kawahara's registered hanko." He handed her the Mayor's seal, and after looking at it for a moment she opened a book of records and leafed through it. She found the correct entry and brought it to the Inspector.

"Yes," Ueki said, "this is it. Now I wish to speak to the person who carved it."

The old woman looked apologetic. "I am most sorry, but my son, Kotaro Kake, made that hanko, and he is not here now. He left for vacation yesterday and I do not know when he will return."

Ueki was considering the situation when a middle-aged man emerged from a workroom in the rear of the shop. The woman turned toward him. "Banbara-san, you may be able to help if you will be so kind."

He regarded us suspiciously. "What do you require? Kake-san is the master of this shop. I am only his assistant."

Ueki took out his identification again. Banbara's eyes widened. He spun on his heels and dashed through the workroom, running through a rear exit into an alley. Ueki reacted quickly. By the time I reached the alley he had an armlock on the man, who refused to speak. Ueki pulled him back into the shop and telephoned for a cruiser.

The old woman, who had watched with open-mouthed amazement, asked Ueki what was wrong. "I do not know yet, but Banbara-san is going to have to go with us to answer some questions."

The cruiser arrived, and two uniformed officers took Banbara to Police Headquarters.

City Hall was crowded with hundreds of people waiting in lines to have various documents stamped. Two men were in Mayor Kawahara's private office. We sat in an outer reception room until he escorted them out and asked us in.

The Mayor came directly to the point without the usual courtesy rituals. "What report do you have, Inspector Ueki?"

Ueki's face was solemn. "We arrested a man named Banbara at the shop where your signet was carved. He has refused to speak, but we searched his home and found these." He reached into his pocket and removed three hankos. "One is a duplicate of yours. We have talked to the other two men whose hankos were counterfeited and they confirm that they, too, have lost rather large sums of money in unauthorized bank withdrawals."

"When was this done?" Kawahara asked.

Ueki consulted his memo pad. "All three withdrawals were made on Wednesday. The owner of the hanko shop, Kotaro Kake, left for vacation yesterday—Thursday. The bank clerks have identified Banbara as the man who made the withdrawals. In my opinion, Banbara is the man who also called the banks to see if the accounts were adequate to cover large withdrawals."

"Well," I interrupted, "you seem to have your man."

Ueki and the Mayor gave me one of those looks reserved for resident foreigners who are slow in understanding Japanese ways.

The Inspector shook out his last cigarette, crumpled the pack, and threw it in a wastebasket. "No, Sam. Banbara-san's behavior suggests complicity in a crime. His refusal to speak in light of all the evidence indicates that he is being loyal to the man who masterminded the scheme and who now is so conveniently on vacation—Kotaro Kake."

He turned to the Mayor. "Would you agree with that, Kawahara-san?"

"It is a reasonable assumption, Inspector. Do you know where Kake-san is spending his vacation?"

"His mother told us he had gone to visit a brother in a fishing village near Mishima Island."

The Mayor touched the telephone on his desk. "I will be in touch with your superiors, Inspector. I would like for you to go to the village as soon as possible." He smiled at me. "And perhaps you, Mr. Brent, could profit by seeing something of Japan other than the crowded cities."

I was anxious to go.

In the morning I called Goto-san, the chief clerk at the computer hardware office I manage, and advised him of my destination. Inspector Ueki met me at Okayama Station after picking up his travel funds. We took an inexpensive train that would carry us part of the way north across the island of Honshu to one of the port cities on the Sea of Japan.

With the exception of the more expensive expresses, most forms of land transportation in Japan are crowded with commuting high school students on weekdays, and the seats across from us were occupied by two girls wearing the traditional school uniform—black skirts and middy blouses. Ueki ignored them, but as a foreigner I couldn't escape their notice. After a bit of giggling and whispering one of them worked up the courage to address me in English. Most Japanese assume that all for-

eigners speak English. To Ueki's silent amusement I found myself giving an impromptu English lesson for the next half hour. The charm and grace of their thanks was adequate reward.

We changed trains several times and traveled by bus for part of the trip. When we arrived at the seaport we took a taxi to the dock area and booked passage on a ship to Mishima Island. A heavy wind was blowing and the sea was covered by whitecaps.

"It looks like it may be a rough trip," I observed.

Ueki laughed. "For the Sea of Japan, this is not so bad."

The passenger hold was one large space covered with straw mats; there were no individual cabins. The passengers who arrived early picked spots where they could sit crosslegged and lean against the walls; latecomers crowded together in the center of the hold.

We put out to sea and almost immediately most of the passengers took blankets from a neat stack in the corner, pulled them up to their necks, and went to sleep. I had seen the same behavior on airplanes, and asked Ueki the reason.

He grinned. "When we are on a ship or a plane we want to be asleep if something happens." He leaned back and closed his eyes. I sat and tried not to think of the tossing of the ship on the restless sea.

At Mishima Island, a resort area, we took a smaller boat to the fishing village on a nearby island. There were only three other passengers, and Ueki began talking to them. We learned that Kotaro Kake's brother, Tsutomu, was a fisherman who plied the sea with his own boat.

Ueki asked if there would be a place where we could spend a night or two and was informed that there was an inn of sorts that accommodated occasional visitors.

The boat tied up, and we got off and walked through the village, which consisted of thatched-roof houses arranged in a semicircle around a bay.

There was something out of the ordinary about the village, and I finally realized that it was silence—the absence of the constant city din of cars, motorcycles, trolleys, and trains. I mentioned it to Ueki.

"Good observation, Sam. During the day, you will not even hear the voices of children—they go by boat for schooling on the larger islands."

We paused at a shrine set in front of a concrete sea wall and looked out into the bay. Women in rowboats were peering through glass-bottomed

buckets in search of edible seaweed, which later would be hung over the sea wall to dry in the sun, then pressed and sent to market.

The inn was located near the mouth of the bay. It was a typical village structure, made of local timbers and thatched with straw. The old man in charge, Hamura-san, welcomed us and showed us the location of the bath and the futons—the floor bedding rolled up and stored in a closet during the day. We paid him the equivalent of six dollars each for a night's lodging, then asked where we might find Tsutomu Kake. Hamura-san took us to the entranceway and pointed to a sheet-metal structure in the direction we had come from.

Inside, we found several men dressed in the rough garb and heavy rubber boots of fishermen. The building housed supplies, tackle, and netting. When we asked for Tsutomu Kake, a short muscular man in his middle fifties stepped forward, bowed, and introduced himself. Inspector Ueki said he had something to discuss in private and Kake led us to a spot near the shrine, where we sat on the sea wall.

Slowly and politely, Ueki related the events that had led to our trip to the village. "So," he concluded, "the only question remaining is why your brother made duplicate hankos and had his assistant withdraw money belonging to other people."

Tsutomu Kake looked out past the bay for a moment, a deep sadness in his eyes. "I am very ashamed of my brother, Inspector Ueki. I sent him a letter some time ago telling him I needed money for a new engine and other equipment for my fishing boat. He replied that he had made a great deal of money in his shop, and promised to bring it to me." Kake spread his hands in despair, and I saw that they were covered with the scars and calluses of his trade.

"And," Ueki asked, "did you receive the money?"

"I did, but not a yen has been spent. I will return it to you immediately." He motioned for us to follow him, and when we reached his home the fisherman invited us inside. We found his brother, Kotaro, a man of almost sixty, sitting crosslegged before a low table, writing a letter. He did not seem surprised to see us.

Ueki spoke first. "I believe you know who we are."

Kotaro Kake, the hanko-maker, had no apologies and no excuses.

"In my heart, I knew that I would be punished and that someone would

come after me. I have written my confession." He handed the piece of paper to Ueki.

The Inspector read it. "Although you take the blame, you know that your assistant, Banbara-san, also will have to stand trial even if he acted only out of loyalty to you."

Kotaro Kake stood up and walked over to a Shinto shrine on a wall. "Will his punishment be so severe if the money is returned?"

"He has violated the law, Kake-san, and there can be no exceptions." Ueki was silent for a moment. "However, the return of the money may incline the court to leniency. Do you wish for me to call for the police in this prefecture or do you wish to return to Okayama with us voluntarily?"

"The voluntary way seems best."

"A wise decision, I think. What time does the next boat for Mishima depart?"

Tsutomu Kake answered that it would be in the morning, and Ueki and I returned to the inn.

We found a small delegation waiting for us—a number of fishermen and their wives. Hamura-san bowed deeply and apologized. "Please excuse us, but this is the first time a foreigner has visited our village in almost thirty years and we wished to make him welcome."

On the long table in the center of the inn's large common room were dishes of fresh squid sashimi, the pink succulent meat of sea urchins, and several varieties of steamed mollusks. Ueki smiled his appreciation, and we bowed our thanks and sat down on the soft cushions placed around the table. Shyly, the old man and the other villagers then took their places. Large bottles of Sapporo beer were on the table, and I got up and went to each person, filling glasses. After the first ritual sip of beer, we ate and talked, and I came to respect the sturdy people of the village and their natural, keen intelligence and humor. The meal ended with candied pieces of mandarin-orange peel.

The delegation departed and the old man brought out his kiseru, a long-stemmed pipe with a tiny metal bowl, into which he inserted one end of a Golden Bat cigarette. The sun had set and I was enjoying myself, listening to the old man's timeless stories of courage and tragedy at sea. After the moon had risen over the bay, Hamura-san asked Ueki if he



would explain the reason for our visit. Ueki complied, and Hamura-san leaned across the table, peering intently at Ueki.

"I have lived many years, Inspector, and have seen my share of human foolishness. Is there not something you can do to salvage the lives of the Kake brothers and Banbara-san?"

Ueki put down his glass of beer. "Tabun." Maybe. "I would like to make several calls to Okayama from your telephone. I will pay you, of course."

The Inspector was still on the telephone when I went for my bath, and when he completed his calls I made two of my own—one to Noriko.

We awoke early in the morning and had finished a light breakfast when the Kake brothers arrived. Both appeared tired and I suspected that they had passed the night lamenting the consequences of Kotaro Kake's folly.

Ueki asked them to sit down and Hamura-san poured coffee for us. The Inspector spoke directly to the hanko-maker. "I suppose that you are ready to return to your shop?"

Kotaro Kake's hand knocked over his cup. "Please, I do not understand."

Ueki nibbled a piece of pressed seaweed. "All of us have thought about your crime, Kake-san. Your motive was good and the method was clever, but it was wrong nevertheless. However, all of the money has been returned. Last night I talked to Mayor Kawahara and the three bank managers, and we have a proposition for you and your assistant, Banbara-san."

The signet carver's lips were trembling. "What proposition, Inspector?"

"From this day on, your hanko shop will work exclusively for the three banks, making all of the seals they require. You may still have private customers, but the needs of the banks will come first. For your work you will receive fair pay, and part of that pay will go to help your brother refit his boat."

I then spoke to the fisherman, Tsutomu Kake. "I've talked to my head clerk, Goto-san. Our company installs bilingual computer printout systems for many Japanese industries. Goto-san says he knows a number of export companies which might be interested in contracting with the fishermen of your village for your squid catches. As soon as I return to Okayama I'll be in touch with them—and you."

Hamura-san's seamed face was radiant. "Umai desu!" Well done! "Our

two important visitors have accepted the wisdom of a proverb older than any of our written laws: Never break another man's rice bowl."

The boat that would take us to Mishima on our way back to Honshu pulled into the harbor. I promised Hamura-san that I would try to return to his village someday.

The sea was calm. I stood at the stern of the ship with Inspector Ueki while Kotaro Kake dozed below with the other passengers. We looked out beyond the foaming wake and dipping gulls to the misty horizon which stretched from Mainland China to the two Koreas and the Soviet Union. The sun and salt-spray felt good on my face.

"You know, Toshiko, I feel especially good about the outcome of this matter."

The Inspector flicked a cigarette into the water. "How is that, Sam?"

"Instead of putting Kake and Banbara into prison you've earned their lasting gratitude and loyalty, and that loyalty certainly will benefit the banks and everyone else concerned."

"True. And for me it is doubly nice, Sam. I have not broken anyone's rice bowl and I have done myself a favor of no small importance."

"What kind of favor, Toshiko?"

The Inspector inhaled deeply. "I will not have to sit in a stuffy courtroom all day waiting to testify."



*Otto Penfield needed protection . . .*

# KILLING IS EASY

by  
**ROBERT  
LOPRESTI**



Otis Penfield was terrified, and he had his reasons.

"You've got to help me, Mr. Aken. I need protection."

I studied him across the desk. His thin frame was perched on the edge of the visitor's chair like a bird about to take off. He was a bundle of nervous symptoms: facial twitches, prematurely greying hair, and, I was willing to bet, a fine collection of ulcers.

"Who steered you to me, Mr. Penfield?"

He shrugged. "The phonebook. Max Aken was the first name under Private Investigators."

"It helps to be born at the start of the alphabet," I agreed. "What's your problem?"

He looked around the office, which was nothing to inspire confidence. I had a feeling seedy joints in rundown neighborhoods were not his usual habitat.

"Someone's trying to kill me, Mr. Aken."

I lit a cigarette, and looked in vain for an ashtray. "Any particular reason?" I pulled a wastebasket to my side. Fortunately, it was empty.

"I'm an accountant for Fairday Industries."

I whistled. "If you want to count money for a living, you might as well work someplace where they have a lot of it."

Penfield seemed unimpressed by my sense of humor. He wasn't the first. "Millions of dollars enter that corporation every year, Mr. Aken. Normally, each accountant sees only the books of the division in which he works."

"Each rat in his own maze," I said.

"Last month, Mr. Fairday, the corporate president, ordered me to write a financial overview for the annual report. Our comptroller usually handles that, but he was ill."

Penfield stopped to take out a handkerchief and wipe sweat from his brow.

"So you got a look at the big picture."

"I did. And I discovered major discrepancies. Fund transfers between divisions that never arrived at their destinations. Unrecorded loans of—"

"I'll take your word for it," I said. "Someone's been writing fiction in the ledgers. Did you tell the boss?"

"Mr. Fairday is on vacation. I didn't feel I could tell anyone but him."

"What about the comptroller? Or is he still out sick?"

Penfield looked grim. "He's back. But *he's* responsible for the discrepancies."

"Oh ho." I dropped the cigarette butt into the wastebasket. "You're sure?"

"Sure enough to swear to it in court, if necessary."

"Did you confront him with it?"

"Not intentionally, but he found out." He looked around the room. "Does that door lead to a bathroom?"

"Yes, but I'm afraid it's out of order." I smiled apologetically. "You miss a few months' rent and the landlord refuses to send you a plumber." Penfield winced. The idea of missing rent payments stabbed him to his accountant's heart. "What's the comptroller's name?"

"Fred Larrabee."

"You were telling me how he found out about your discovery."

"Yes. Apparently he found my notes. The next day he invited me into his office for a talk." My client grimaced. "He explained that he had a gambling problem, which had caused him to go into debt to—he called it the mob."

I nodded. "I'm familiar with the term."

"So he borrowed from Fairday Industries to pay his debts—"

"And then the mob had a handle on him. He had to borrow more for them or they'd turn him in."

"That's exactly right."

"An old story." I scratched my chin, which needed a shave. "Do you believe him?"

"Yes. The frauds seem to indicate payment to a third party."

"But why would he tell you about it?"

"To frighten me. He warned me his associates wouldn't want their operations disturbed. He said they'd hire someone to kill me if they thought I'd talk."

I nodded. "Among Mr. Larrabee's friends hiring a hitman would be standard procedure."

The accountant wiped his face again. "As I said, I believed him. But he didn't believe *me*. I said I'd forget the whole thing, but he knew it was a lie." He got up and started to pace. "I made copies of the evidence before I left for the day. Yesterday I called in sick. Today, when I left home, someone followed me."

I flipped open the notebook on my desk. "Did you get a look at the guy?"

"No, I just sensed he was there. I took a train to the city and called you from the station. I think I lost the person who was following me there. I haven't seen any sign of him since."

I went to the window and saw only a dirty street—no one out there unless he was disguised as uncollected garbage. "Exactly what do you want from me, Mr. Penfield?"

He swallowed hard. "Keep me alive."

I shrugged. "Killing is easy—preventing it may be difficult. If a hitman's been paid to kill you, it's just a matter of time."

The accountant sat down and leaned forward. "But time is on my side. Mr. Fairday will be home in forty-eight hours. Once I tell him what's happened it won't do the mob any good to kill me."

"Why not go to the police?"

"And tell them there's an embezzler in the corporation?" He seemed shocked. "I couldn't do that behind Mr. Fairday's back. It wouldn't be right."

The noble accountant, loyal even in the face of death. "O.K., Mr. Penfield. You're hiring me to keep you alive and well, and to get you and the evidence safely to Mr. Fairday two days from now. About the fee—"

He pulled a lovely green bundle out of his jacket pocket. Good old cash—something you seldom see these days. "That's two thousand dollars," he said, handing it to me.

"Seems reasonable," I said. "Next question, I think, is that photocopied evidence. Where have you stashed it?"

He reached into another pocket and produced a tightly folded bunch of papers.

"You've been carrying it?"

"It seemed the safest thing to do."

I shook my head. "Mr. Penfield, you're amazing. The mob didn't need to hire a hitman—a pickpocket could have done the job." He looked annoyed. "Give me the papers and I'll put them in the safe."

He handed them over.

"Did you tell anyone else about your discovery?"

"No one."

"Think carefully—their lives might depend on it. Your wife, or your secretary?"

He smiled briefly. "I'm not married and I don't rate a secretary. Believe me, Mr. Aken, I haven't told anyone."

"O.K., now if we—"

The damned phone rang. I gave him an apologetic shrug and picked it up.

The caller was a woman named Cindy who wanted to know where Max was. I told her to call back in an hour. When I got up I saw Penfield at

the open bathroom door, making gasping noises. I jumped up. "I told you it isn't working!"

He stood, frozen. "There's a dead body in here!"

"I know." I went and closed the door and steered him, back toward the desk. "Have a seat while I explain."

"Explain? Who is it?"

"Max Aken, the private detective."

"But you're Max—" He saw my gun and went quiet.

I sat on the edge of the desk, keeping the gun aimed at him. "You were right, Mr. Penfield. I was at the train station this morning, close enough to hear you make this appointment. After you left I took a look at the phonebook. You left it open to the page of private eyes, and Max Aken's name and number were circled." I shook my head. "That's a bad habit, writing on other people's property."

Otis Penfield's eyes were bulging. His face had gone as pale as a ledger sheet.

"After that I just had to come here and pretend to be you. Aken let me in, and I killed him. Once he was out of the way all I had to do was wait for you and pretend to be *him*."

"But—but why—"

"Why did we have that long chat? I couldn't just shoot you. Mr. Larabee and my bosses insisted I try to find out what evidence you had. I admit I didn't expect you to hand it over so easily." My finger tightened on the trigger.

Penfield started to scream, but didn't make it. Like I said, killing is easy.



*The men were executed under the pirate code . . .*

# THE INCOMPLETE SALMAGUNDI

by  
S.S.

## RAFFERTY



Leave it to Cork to break a bad habit just when you don't want him to. Whenever we are in the New York colony his social doings keep him out all night—and he *always* sleeps until noon. But on the one day when the kitchen of the Sign of the Mournful Swan was tied up with special catering and not serving regular guests until midday, here he came out of his rooms at the stroke of ten with a famished look on his face. I dreaded giving him the bad news, knowing he'd explode like a 32-gun broadside.



"What special catering?" he roared.

"Something about a private breakfast, Captain. Now, I can step down to Whitehall Slip and have the oysters back here in minutes. And I can mix Apple Knock as well as the barkeep belowstairs."

His eyes squinted in anger and I knew he was reloading for another volley. I had committed the ultimate crime—I had acted like a servant. Actually, I started my relationship with this American as his indenture, but he set me free immediately. I have since worked as his financial yeoman, trying desperately to make him the richest man in the colonies—and I could, if he would only pay attention to his many holdings and the opportunities these colonies offer.

But Cork has flaws beyond sleeping late, and carousing to all hours, and ladies, and dice, and race-course betting. His paramount weakness is his penchant for becoming involved in what he calls social puzzles—what we work-a-day mortals call the solution of crime.

"Oaks, I'll have Dermott in two minutes if you please," he thundered.

Every now and again, mostly when angry, he slips back into the language of the quarterdeck, which is ironic since he hasn't set foot in the trading vessel he owns in four years or more. For that matter, he hasn't set foot in or laid an eye on any one of the many enterprises I have developed for him throughout the colonies. I could inform him that we had just lost 10,000 pounds on one venture or another and he would blithely shrug it off—but heaven forbid he should be without a shilling's worth of oysters for breakfast. His "I'll have Dermott *if you please*," was a phrase one would expect from a stern, disciplined ship's master, but certainly not from Captain Jeremy Cork, the *bon vivant* of western civilization. However, there was little hope of soothing him and I fetched the innkeeper with all the trepidatious dispatch of a junior midshipman.

When Dermott entered our sitting room, he had the good sense to leave the hall door open behind him, assuring a quick escape route should Cork take a fancy to violence. The poor hostelier was quaking under his apron and I wondered if the beads of sweat on his brow were from fear of Cork or the heat of the busy kitchen from which he had just come.

"Beg pardon, Captain Cork sir, but in the ten years you've stopped with us I've never known you to arise before noon or later."

Cork snarled in disgust. "Now I'm accused of being a slugabed, a wastrel—a worthless carouser!"

I wouldn't call him worthless, not with me keeping the ledgers, but the rest of his self-description was right on the chalk.

"By no means, Captain," Dermott implored. "We all know of your fine reputation and respect your abilities as a detector of crime. Had I known you would be up early today I would have sent the young man to another inn for his breakfast party. In fact, I wish I had, for all the work it's taking to complete the special dish he ordered. It's a most bothersome receipt. As if roasting seven kinds of fish and meat wasn't enough work, where am I to get mangoes, I ask you?"

As the innkeeper went on with his complaints, a serving girl passed our doorway struggling with a large iron pot. Cork's nose went up on scent. "In here, girl," he commanded loudly, and the young thing reappeared at the doorsill looking perplexed.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Dermott, but I thought you said Room 10."

The girl was new to the inn, perky and certainly a vast improvement over the oxlike woman who usually served above stairs. The frail child, however, was no match for the rigors of her calling.

Cork was out of his chair and striding toward the girl, whose perplexity turned to pale fright at the sight of a six-foot-six angry man bearing down on her. He took the pot from her hand and swung it onto the table. I feared that this former privateer was about to steal someone's breakfast. As he lifted the pot's lid, the room was permeated with a pungent odor.

"As I thought," he said, after taking a taste and replacing the lid.

"Pray, Captain," Dermott said nervously, fidgeting with his apron, "I hope you mean no quarrel with Mr. Cobby. He's just a lad."

"I seek no quarrel, Dermott. I am merely curious about anyone who orders a pirate's breakfast. But you have destroyed this salmagundi. Without mangoes, it is incomplete."

"The stalls don't seem to stock them, Captain."

"I think Grangers stall does," proffered the serving girl.

"Here, Mary," Dermott scolded. "Don't go correcting your betters."

"Here, girl," Cork said, handing her the pot. "Take this to Mr. Cobby with my apologies for Dermott's laziness."

She took up the pot again and left, leaving Cork glaring at the innkeeper. Dermott was about to make another penitent plea when Mary reappeared.

"Beg pardon again, gentlemen," she said with a clumsy curtsy. "The young sir in number ten invites you to dine."

"Tell him we shall be delighted," Cork said with a smile . . .

James Cobby was no more than nineteen, thin, clear-skinned, and fine-featured. When Cork first entered his rooms, the lad looked up aghast from the food-laden table.

"Well, split me if you don't actually look like a buccaneer, sir," he said. "But you're much too young to have sailed with the gentlemen of fortune of the 1720s."

"To be sure, sir, I am Captain Jeremy Cork, and this is Wellman Oaks, my associate. Of course, I know the Caribbean well and grew up on stories of the old rogues' escapades. It is rare to have the smell of salmagundi about these parts. I haven't tasted it since the last time I was in the Bahamas."

"Then be my guest, Captain, and give me your opinion of its quality."

We drew up chairs while Mary dished up platefuls of the stuff. It was a highly seasoned assemblage of diced meats, fish, cabbage, and pickled vegetables, which tasted pleasant enough until the heady effects of garlic, mustard seed, pepper, and vinegar took over, sending me reaching for a mug of rum. If this was what pirates ate for breakfast, it went a long way to explain their vicious temperaments.

Cork took several more critical spoonfuls. "The mangoes would help, and the grapes are not as sour as those found in the Islands, but, all in all, a reasonable reproduction. You have an interest in things piratical, Mr. Cobby?"

"Indeed I am fascinated by the subject."

"Which is what brought you to New Providence in the Caribbean upon leaving London?"

"Split me if you're not a conjurer, or have been following me about."

"Neither, Mr. Cobby, neither. Your use of current London slang betrays a recent departure from England and yet your tanned face tells me you have been in the tropical sun not more than a week ago."

"Two weeks, actually. I landed in Charleston and came north by coaster."

"And your fondness for salmagundi could only come from a stay at New Providence, the former stronghold of the pirates before the Navy drove them out."

"You seem to be a bit of an expert on pirates yourself, Captain Cork."

Expert indeed. Cork spent two years privateering for the King back in the early days of the French and Indian, and I find little distinction between letters of marque and out-and-out brigandry.

"Mildly so," Cork replied with a straight face.

Dermott, obviously pleased to see Cork calmed down, decided to add a bit of sugar to the situation before he returned to the kitchen, leaving Mary to serve. "Captain Cork, sir, is too modest. He is well known in these parts as a detector."

Cobby *was* impressed. "Well, split me again. Am I entertaining a King's Sheriff, sir?"

"No, I have only a casual interest in crime," Cork replied, which was a damned understatement, I assure you.

"Well, at least someone showed up at my little feast."

"Out of curiosity and the loss of my own breakfast, I'm afraid." Cork was curious. "Your other guests declined, I take it?"

"Perhaps the *Advance* was the wrong newspaper in which to place the advertisement. You have so many in New York."

Cobby dug into his coat pocket and produced a clipping which I read around Cork's shoulder:

In Honor of  
The House of Lords  
A Salmagundi Will  
Be Served and Particulars  
of The Sweet Trade Discussed  
Wed. at 10 in the forenoon  
in the  
Sign of the Mournful Swan  
Jms. Cobby

I looked up at Cobby to find a ridiculously self-pleased smile on his face. "You see, gentlemen, I have in mind to write a play about pirates. Good idea, what? Truly fine theater—lots of action, swordplay, and all that."

Cork handed the clipping back to the animated playwright. "Well, sir, if you are expecting the senior members of Black Bart Roberts' crew to put in an appearance, you'll spend a lifetime at it. They were all captured and hung in Africa back in '22. Roberts himself was killed in that skirmish with the Royal Navy."

Cobby's smile turned slyly foxlike. "*Purportedly* killed, Captain. His body was supposedly thrown overboard by the crew, but never found."

"If you have ever sailed the waters of the Gulf of Guinea, sir, you would have observed that sharks have a nasty habit of foiling a swimmer's escape."

"True, true," Cobby went on undaunted, "but the senior crew did call themselves The House of Lords—Lord Sutton, Lord Hamly, Lord Simpson—and I thought it might pique some old pirates' curiosity and bring them to my table where I could hear firsthand of the old days on the pirate round."

"Hardly a chance of that, Mr. Cobby," Cork said. "Ex-pirates are not prone to public discussion."

As Cork spoke, there was a clatterous noise in the hall, and as it came closer it became a rhythmic thump until it stopped at the doorsill and there stood a gnome of a man, hoary with age, perched on a peg leg.

"'Scuse me, sirs," the old man said, putting his fist to his brow in a nautical salute, "would this be the party what was advertised?"

"It is indeed," Cobby said, getting to his feet and ushering his new guest in. As he did so, he gave Cork a triumphant sneer. "And whom do I have the honor of addressing?"

"Mungo Waychurch, at your service" was the reply. His old grey eyes scanned the room with suspicion while his toothless face feigned a smile.

Cobby led the old salt to a chair and poured a mug of rum, which the newcomer drank with zest. The eyes were still suspicious and darted from face to face.

"Say now, you lads aren't from up the King's College out for a bit of sport, are you? Yer all too short from the pap to have been on the round."

I explained Cobby's theatrical scheme, which seemed to allay Mungo Waychurch's apprehension about schoolboy pranks. "Now that's a trim idea, laddie, powerful trim."

"Ah, may I ask if you are a former pirate, sir?" Cobby ventured.

"Pirate, no. Forced man, aye, and only a lad at the time. Taken off the East Indiaman *Golden Wing* in '19 by Black Bart hisself. Was ship's fiddler, I was, and them buccaneers love music, so they 'pressed me." He raised a hand solemnly. "Never signed articles ner took the oath ner fired a shot. Part of ship's idlers, I was." He raised the half leg, bottomed by wood. "Took a shot of grape off Trepassi and damn near died. Got put ashore in North Carolina with a letter from Bart Roberts hisself to the Governor and got my pardon. It's in my dunnage up on Cherry Street if you'd like to see it."

Cobby momentarily was snapped from his fascination with the new arrival to remember that he was the host. "Forgive me, Mr. Waychurch, you came for salmagundi and that's what you shall have." He motioned to Mary, who dutifully dished up another plate. "Enjoy, sir, enjoy," Cobby urged.

"At yer service, lads. 'Course, the old sally was never my favorite, me leaning to lobscours as best."

At the very mention of the name of that awful dish I near gagged. When I first transported to these colonies, I lived on salt beef lobbed over the ship's side on a line to let the sea freshen or "scour" it. If that wasn't bad enough, the meat was then cut into small pieces and made into a potato, onion, and pepper stew. And that wasn't the end of this ancient man's ability to ingest swill.

"After lobscours, I guess I'd rather hoist Scratch Plate er chowder or even a good Stirabout. Now don't go thinkin' every day was a king's banquet in *Royal Rover*. Too many's the time it was 'taters, tack, and water you wouldn't wash a hog in."

Despite Waychurch's rather earthy description of shipboard food, I was indeed a bit fascinated myself, but I could see Cork was becoming uneasy—that is, until Cobby took the sketch from his pocket.



"What do you make of this?" he asked the man.

It was quite unusual:

"Ah me," Waychurch sighed, "if these old eyes hadn't been dried of water by wind and salt spray I'd give you a tear, I would. That's old Bart's jolly flag when he was mad at the Governors of Barbados and Martinique. Quince, our sailmaker, damn near lost his nose for not making ole Bart more fancylike. He even forgot to put Bart's lucky crucifix on the flag figure, which was a mortal sin, 'cause it never left Bart's neck. Aye, he was a peacock of a man with his scarlet suits and pistols slung from silk cords over his shoulders and that diamond crucifix glistening in the sun."

"Yes, I'm sure he was," Cobby said impatiently, "but was there any significance in the ABH and AMH under the skulls? Was it a cypher, perhaps?"

This question brought a typhoon of laughter from Waychurch and a smirk from Cork.

"To be sure, young sir. Ye see, Bart wanted to put some fear into the islanders, so he swore to kill both the Barbados and Martinique Governors. The letters stand for A Barbadian's Head and A Martinique's Head. 'Twas a trick of war, so to speak."

Cobby took on a chagrined demeanor.

"Then why did he have it engraved on a plate and affixed to his cabin door?"

Waychurch hunched his shoulders and bowed his head in a feeble attempt to pantomime a question mark.

"We'll never know, will we?"

"Somehow," Cobby said lowly, almost to himself, "I think it has more significance, or else why preserve it? What do you think, Captain Cork? Could there be a hidden message in this ABH-AMH business?"

"What lays before you is often all there is, Mr. Cobby," Cork said with a shrug.

"That's clear thinking, Captain," Waychurch interjected between mouthfuls of old sally. "Captain, is it, eh? Knew you was no lubber. Thirty years ago, you'd have made a well primed pistol-proof Captain on the round." He turned his head to Cobby. "Now, if you're plannin' a theatrical play about Bart Roberts, sir, I'm as good a hand as you can find. Could even play myself, I could, and the fiddle as well."

For some strange reason, Cobby changed the subject abruptly. "Rob-

erts is only one consideration. The name Calico Jack Rackman seems to have more flair to it."

This truly convulsed Waychurch to the point of spewing bits of salmagundi about the room. "Rackman!" The old man roared with mirth. "Anyone but Rackman! Take Henry Eveny, Ed England, Stede Bonnet, Howell Davis, or, God help us, even the cowardly dastard Charlie Vane, whose own crew wouldn't have him, but spare yourself Calico Jack."

"Well, the name is interesting and lends itself to colorful costuming," Cobby offered apologetically.

"And that's about all. A costume, a fake. The only prizes he ever took were fishing smacks." He thumped his peg leg on the floor to the beat of his laughter. "Damn fool takes a woman to sea with him and chases herring catchers for a living. Might as well become a fisherman. Now there's the mark of Rackman's boobery—havin' a woman with him. Oh, to be sure many a son-of-a-gun was spawned amid the cannon train tackles, but that was in port. You'd never find sluts and jills asea in a real pirate ship. Later, before Rackman got swung at Provincetown, he had two women in the crew. Hell, if the Navy hadn't caught up with him he might have had a full crew of jades." He was positively engulfed with laughter at this point. "And not a bad idea, since they could all escape the string by pleading the belly. Rackman was an ass, and so was that slut of his, Annie Bonnie."

The coarse language seemed to unnerve the serving girl and she accidentally spilled some rum while pouring me another mug. Feeling sorry for her, I brushed it off without comment.

"Yes, Anne Bonnie," Cobby rhapsodized. "Oh, to have her story from her own lips. What a vehicle for an actress."

"She was a herring catcher is all," Waychurch insisted.

"Well, that certainly takes the drama out of it," Cobby said with disappointment, "but I'll tuck it away for later use. However, we still have Black Bart Roberts *and* the man who sailed with him. You say you were wounded at Trepassi. That's in Newfoundland, isn't it?"

"'Tis that. It's a formation point for merchantmen sailing in convoy to England. Bart jumped the lot of 'em and sacked 'em clean for 350,000 pounds."

"After Trepassi, on the return to New Providence, did you put in anywhere along the New England coast for any reason?"

"Well, I couldn't rightly say, since I was either unconscious or out of



my head after losin' my leg. I'm damned lucky to be alive, never mind notin' ports of call. What's so important 'bout the trip down the coast?"

"Oh, it's nothing," Cobby said, seemingly brushing aside his original intense interest. "I merely thought it might make an interesting scene if Roberts had buried treasure after the Trepassi raid."

Cork's mounting uneasiness took hold, and he raised himself to his feet. "You'll have to forgive us, Mr. Cobby, but we have urgent appointments to keep. Thank you for the salmagundi and good fortune with your play."

Our announced departure bestirred Mungo Waychurch. "I'd best hoist the hook myself, young sir."

"Pray stay, gentlemen. Girl, fill the tankards—more salmagundi."

Cork emphatically declined, but the peg-legged man, now become pliant with rum, was induced to stay. Cobby bid us goodbye and said, "You really think I will not uncover any ex-pirates here, Captain Cork?"

"I sincerely doubt it."

We returned to our rooms, leaving the two men in deep conversation. Of course, we had no urgent business but it was obvious that Cork was bored by the exchange. "I found it rather interesting," I said. "A play about pirates could make a fortune."

"If indeed our young host intends to write a play."

"You think not? Oh, me," I cried as his meaning came through, "the jolly jack cypher—you think he's looking for buried pirate treasure?"

"He's looking for something, to be sure, but not a play, I fear, since London would be his best place for research among admiralty records."

I saw his point. Every once in a great while, buried treasure fever sweeps the colonies, and England as well. Despite the fact that none has ever been found except Captain Kidd's cache on Gardiners Island in Long Island Sound—which was confiscated by the Crown—the searches go on and on.

"Well, you have to give a young fellow credit for his enterprise," I chided my lazy employer. "Be it a theatrical play or a treasure quest, Cobby, at least, is working at something."

Someday I'll learn to let sleeping dogs lie, because my goading brought on the announcement that we were off to find a buried treasure of our own—only this was as wild a goose chase as any starry-eyed boy's.

Our objective was a copper mine Cork owns up on the Hudson. I say *he* owns because he bought the place two years ago without consulting me. In that time it has produced untold tons of shale, dirt, mud, and

other ejectamata of nature. To even call it a copper mine is an insult to intelligence. His Nibs blithely tells the miners to keep digging. At this rate, he will own a direct route to China, but no copper, I fear.

We returned to the Mournful Swan two days later to be greeted by an angry Dermott.

"Should have known he was a fly-by-night," he said with self-disgust. "Special breakfasts indeed. Slipped out of here with three days owing. Say, Captain, how about some salmagundi for breakfast tomorrow? I found the stall where mangoes are sold."

"I'm afraid not," Cork answered, and as we started upstairs he was interrupted by a young man bearing an envelope.

"From the High Sheriff, sir," he said, handing the message to Cork, who opened it, read quickly, and said, "We will come."

Why they pay High Sheriff van Gaus of New York a salary is beyond me. Every time he has a bothersome piece of skulduggery on his hands he sends for Cork. Normally, we meet him at his headquarters in the gaol up on the Common, but this missive took us south rather than north, to Whitehall Slip, where we found a naval warship's jolly boat awaiting us. We no sooner settled ourselves in the thwarts when the coxswain pushed off and set the oarsmen to a steady pull toward Governor's Island.

Once there, we swerved around the north promontory and slipped into Buttermilk Channel, where a naval sloop lay anchored in the late-afternoon sun. As we passed under her afterchains, I made out her name—*H.M.S. Angela*—and wondered what we could possibly have to do with an admiralty matter.

Van Gaus, rotund as ever, met us at the entry port and quickly introduced Captain Boggs, the ship's commander, referred to as "Captain" by courtesy but not rank, since his single epaulette denoted his lieutenancy. Van Gaus announced *Angela's* job as coastal patrol from New York to the Floridas, as part of the King's American Squadron.

Boggs's greying temples, tired face, and obvious 40-plus years put the poor man among that legion of naval officers who, lacking a friend at court or Parliament, or at the least a benevolent Admiral, were doomed never to make the post-Captains list and the security it offered.

"When I got the summons from Captain Boggs and saw what you're about to see," van Gaus said almost gleefully, "my first instinct was to send for you, Captain Cork." He turned to the *Angela's* commander.

"Now watch this fella go to work, Captain Boggs. He's a thing of wonderment about fact-finding, he is."

Boggs looked unconcerned, or at least unimpressed, but bowed slightly in deference. "Any help you may contribute, sir." He turned to a crew member. "Bosun, I'll have that tarp off now."

The mate's fist came to brow, an "aye, sir" was said, and several barefooted seamen laid to on a tarpaulin which covered some object on the deck behind us. When the canvas was removed, I stood firmly, trying to withstand the shock of surprise. There, still wet from the sea, were the bodies of two men lashed together, face to face. One had a peg leg.

"Cobby and Waychurch!" I said.

"You know these fellas, Mr. Oaks?" van Gaus said with amazement.

Cork quickly explained our breakfast encounter and his suspicions of Cobby's intent to write a play.

"Well, damn me for a stroke of luck," van Gaus chuckled, "here I thought we'd be busier than a fiddler's elbow trying to solve this mess and you come along with the information."

"Of course, my friend Oaks did not say they *are* our breakfast companions, only that they appear to be. The bodies seem to have been badly used by the water."

Captain Boggs nodded agreement. "Been in the water two days or so, I'd venture. Fished up by an outbound merchantman and turned over to me. They must have come down the East River—a rough passage, with all the small islands cutting the tidal flow. You say you are not positive of their identities, Captain Cork?"

"Not entirely. One of them has a peg leg and the other seems young enough, but that's not the important aspect."

"Seems to me," van Gaus pontificated, "that half the job is done."

"Possibly," Cork said, "it's the other half that's the mystery. You see, Sheriff, these men were executed under the pirate code. Any crew member who murders a shipmate is lashed to his victim's body and tossed into the sea to drown."

"And face his crime," Boggs added ominously, "forevermore into eternity."

Cork nodded in agreement. "You undoubtedly have had service against pirates, Captain Boggs."

The statement suddenly stiffened the commander's back like a proud jib capturing an errant wind. "Was junior mids under Ogle in *Swallow*,

a sixty-gunner on the Royal African Company patrol. We took Bartholomew Roberts and his horde to task."

"Admirable," Cork said courteously. "Let's hope piracy is not surfacing in these waters again."

"Piracy!" van Gaus cried. "Now that's all I need. First, I've got an outbreak of smuggling that's the worst ever, now I've got pirates about." He shook his finger at Boggs. "While all the while your Admiral Grice basks his squadron in the Caribbean and leaves the whole coast to be patrolled by two sloops."

"I said the method of execution was that of pirates, your honor," Cork explained. "First, let us find out who killed whom and then we can go on to who completed the execution."

Boggs started to order the bosun to cut the bond that held the corpses together when Cork intervened. "If I might do it myself, Captain Boggs, lest vital evidence be lost."

"As you will, sir," Boggs agreed, and the bosun handed his knife to Cork, who knelt down and, after several tries, finally cut through the wet rope. The bodies rolled apart and Cork examined each one carefully. He undid the peg leg, wrapped it in a piece of canvas that was brought forward, and tied it with a piece of the line that had held the bodies together.

"Neither appear to have any body wounds, although they could have been struck on the head," he said, starting to go through the men's pockets. The peg-legged man was clean, but on the other he discovered something and got slowly to his feet to display it.

"Why, it's a cross," I said. "A cross studded with diamonds."

"Yes, Oaks." Cork smiled. "Much like the one supposedly worn by Black Bart, as Waychurch told it. Most interesting."

Two hours later we were sitting in *Angela's* chart room which, with the Captain's minute cabin and pantry, occupied the ship's entire poop. The quarters were crowded enough for one man alone, never mind Cork, myself, and the gargantuan van Gaus.

Cork and Boggs were poring over charts with dividers and parallel rulers and compasses, making endless calculations and mumbling such things as rhomb lines, plane sailing, right ascension, and parallels of declination, which were all too technical for my lights, and van Gaus's as well.

On the bulkhead over the chart table was Cork's crude rendering of

Black Bart's jolly flag showing the pirate standing on the two skulls, brandishing his cutlass heavenward. As far as I could deduce, Cork had a notion that Bart Roberts had used a transportation cypher on his flag that gave the location of the pirate's treasure. I was glad to see he had changed his opinion of two days ago about lost treasure, but why, I asked myself, was he going through this exercise in the presence of two King's officers? If he broke the cypher, van Gaus and Boggs would be duty-bound to confiscate any find in the name of the Crown. I was pleased when the two navigators gave up in frustration.

"Captain Cork," Boggs said, stepping back from the table, "if it is a cypher, then it is undecipherable, and that's a fact. We've tried everything, including letter-to-number sequencing corresponding them into longitudinal and latitudinal fixes; only to end up in the China Seas or the outskirts of Oslo. If the killer calculated a true fix on this supposed treasure and is headed there, he's got clean away with it. I might add you have a fine mastery of navigation, sir."

"As does yourself, Captain Boggs," Cork replied. "Yet we are no match for Black Bart."

"Oh, no shame in that," the commander chuckled, "no shame at all. That gifted scoundrel once laid a course from Annobon on the African coast to Fernando de Noronha off Port-a-gee, Brazil, and hit it dead on the mark. Twenty-eight days across 2,300 miles of rough latitudes, sir. It was like navigating from one pinpoint to another, but he did it."

"Quite a feat," Cork agreed and then, as if suddenly bored with Bart Roberts, he changed the subject. "Patrol work must become tiresome to an obviously talented officer as yourself, sir. Do you trade off with the northern coastal patrol now and again for a change of scenery?"

"Angela has never been north of this port. I'm confined to the southern leg, and happy to be so. You see, I am fortunate to have wed a New York lady, and the southern patrol gives me four days a month ashore. It also suits my counterpart on the northern leg, since his family is in Newfoundland."

"How convenient for you both. Will you join us ashore for dinner, Captain?"

"Ah, I'd like nothing better," Boggs replied, "but I sail with the tide."

Above deck, the ship's bell sounded two double strokes, signalling 6:00 P.M. and the end of the first dogwatch. "My word," van Gaus said with

a start—he had been dozing off and on during the chart exercise—“ ’tis going on dinner, and I’m to speak at the Thursday Club tonight.”

“My men will have you on Whitehall Slip in no time a’tall, Sheriff. I’ve had the corpses sent ahead. Good luck in your detection, Captain Cork.”

“Godspeed on your patrol, sir. Come, Oaks, Sheriff.”

As we descended to the bobbing boat, van Gaus’s girth again caused space allotment problems. It was finally resolved by putting the Sheriff forward, with Cork and I in the stern sheets. As the coxswain ordered, “Out oars and stroke cheerily, lads,” I noticed that a small tarp-wrapped package had been placed at Cork’s feet. It was the peg leg, and probably the only true proof of the old salt’s identity, given the battered condition of the corpse. “Do you think the cypher could actually lead to treasure, Captain? You and Boggs seemed to exhaust every navigational aspect. He seems a fit navigator, hey?”

Behind us, in *Angela*, we could hear the bosun and his mates turning out the crew to make ready for sea. Cork spoke in low tones to avoid being overheard by the oarsmen. “Too fit. All his calculations avoided the American coast from Trepassi to New York, which interested Cobby, yet his charts for that area—where *Angela* never sails—show protractor pin-pricks. I have a feeling Boggs might have an interest in treasure, himself.”

“It’s hard to believe he is in any way implicated in the deaths with the crew looking on,” I pointed out.

“Oaks, you are not a seaman, but you are also not naive. *Angela* may be classed with the smallest in the Navy list, and Boggs may be an ungazetted Captain, but he is lord and master to the 195 souls who serve in her. He can flog and hang at whim. He is the emperor of a 125-foot kingdom.”

“And if the emperor has no clothes—”

“Exactly. Ah, we’re coming up on the Slip. Mister Cox’n, I’ll have the port quay, for’ard berth’n’, if you will.”

Isn’t it wonderful, I thought, that this six-foot-six man who consistently ignores the existence of his own trading ship, *The Hawkers*, has had a nice afternoon to play at being a sailor—and a detector as well.

Once ashore, van Gaus was in a rush to get to his Thursday Club dinner and, to my surprise (and consternation), Cork declined an invitation to join him. The Thursday Club is, without doubt, the most influential group in the New York colony and it wouldn’t hurt our commercial enterprise

to be among them. But the Captain would have none of it, preferring to dine in the public rooms at the Mournful Swan on shad snatched fresh from the Hudson and grilled with a lacing of vinegar, served with heaps of chopped sweet onions and simmered chunks of rhubarb.

"You know, Captain," I said after a few mouthfuls, "this tastes something like the salmagundi we had the other day."

"It's the sweet-and-sour mixture, but not as complex—like this case of Waychurch and Cobby."

"Well, sir, I've been thinking about Captain Boggs possibly being involved in their deaths, and I must say that the pinpricks on a sea chart is the only tangible evidence you have. True, he *could* have seen the advertisement, since he was in port, and he *could* have placed the crucifix on the body, but damn me for a donkey if I see any evidence beyond the circumstantial."

"True enough, Oaks, but many a crime leaves only the circumstantial behind."

"Perhaps he should have been detained by van Gaus."

"One does not detain a King's officer, my friend. No fear, I predict that Captain Boggs is now under full sail and flying as fast as *Angela's* fabric will sustain."

"Flying where?"

"To fame and fortune. But we have other areas to dig into. First, there is the identity of the men. I'm almost sure it is them, given the peg leg and their clothes, but," Cork said, "more important, *why* were they killed?"

"For the secret of the treasure, of course."

"Yes," Cork mused as he finished his shad, "the secret of the treasure is the heart of the matter—"

He didn't finish because Dermott the innkeeper interrupted to say, "Begging the Captain's pardon, but I could sorely use your help when you've finished your victuals."

"We are finished, Dermott. What is your problem?"

"Well, sir, a woman showed up a little while ago asking after that old peg-leg salt that was here t'other day before that scoundrel Cobby skipped out on his bill. What I'd like to know, sir—was them two partners? Because if they were connected in any way I plan to hold this woman responsible for the owings. Not that she looks like she has a farthing, but

I can always use help in the kitchen with new girls coming and going. Were the two men connected, sir?"

"You might say they were closely bonded," Cork said with macabre humor. "Your errant lodger and the peg-legged man appear to be dead. Do you have Cobby's baggage?"

"Yes, sir, and it's only a small parcel."

"Small or not, it's now confiscated by the Crown as material in a murder case. Bring the woman to our rooms, Dermott, and Cobby's baggage as well."

"Aye," the old woman said through rum-rotted breath, "that's his little thumper, it is." She was holding the peg leg Cork had untied from the canvas and getting tearier by the second. "Paid for it myself two years ago when his old one cracked. See that nick? Put it there myself during a—well, never mind, never mind. The poor little monkey dead in the sea." Suddenly her maudlin sorrow turned to anger. She told Cork she didn't know who hired Waychurch. "I told the old fool to keep out of it! 'Oh, it's a chance to pick up a petty tally,' sez he." (Cork is right, I'm no seaman. But I know that a petty tally is a ship's small stores of creature comforts, such as sweets and such.) "We was in no need of money onc't my niece got here."

The old jade cackled at her own humor. "Hell's bells, my niece would have been our petty tally. No Water Street cribs for her, my lads. She'll be right up there on the Holy Ground with the best of them, she will. I told the little monkey to wait, but he was impatient. And see what it got him."

On her arrival in our rooms, I was, of course, shocked at having a woman of this type abovestairs. Cork, however, had courteously offered rum and poured it for her freely. "Tell me, madam," he went on with solicitous respect, "what was the nature of this petty tally?"

"Damned if I know exactly, but it had something to do with going to a party at this inn. I asked why he wasn't taking his fiddle and he said it wasn't needed. He sometimes hired out for parties. He can never come back, poor monkey. He should have waited for Janie to arrive from the West Indies."

"Yes, it's a pity," Cork said with actual sincerity. "Could Waychurch read, by the way?"

"Not that you'd notice. But he could make his mark as well as anyone."



"Did he talk much in public about having been a forced man on the pirate round?"

"Ah, that old bilge," she said with a sweep of her hand. "Half the time I thought he was making it up, doncha know. Sailors is terrible liars, onc't ashore, begging your pardon, sir."

"Yes, truth is a shipboard necessity that mariners find alien among landsmen, so they accommodate to falsity. But didn't Waychurch have a pardon from the Governor of North Carolina?"

"Not that I know of," she said, getting to her feet shakily. "Well, gents, I 'preciate your telling me about the monkey and all, so I'll be off. My niece Janie is due in any day now and I'll give you fine lads 'first ashores' as they say."

"Many thanks, madam," Cork said with a bow, and as she turned to go he added sternly, "and I'll have the leg back too."

She clutched the leg to her chest, her eyes flashing anger. "This here's all I got left of Mungo. Would you deprive me?"

"The King would, madam, and does, for the time being at least. Now I want you to go to the gravesman's shop in Stone Street and view his body. Did he have any notable scars?"

Suddenly an appalled look appeared on her face. "Ow should I know! I follow the lady's rule, I do." She handed back the leg and left with her nose in the air.

"Lady's rule?" I asked.

He had a sly look on his face as he replied, "A Presbyterian shouldn't want to know, my old son."

I ignored his japing as usual. "I wonder who hired Waychurch to attend Cobby's breakfast, and why?"

"The why is easier than the who, Oaks. The advertisement must have knocked over someone's hornet's nest and he sent an agent ahead to scout out its author's intentions."

"Which seem to have been to find Black Bart's treasure. And that leads us back to Captain Boggs's pin-pricked charts."

"So it seems, but the idea of Boggs hiring an intermediary doesn't fit. As a King's officer, he could demand an explanation instead of relying on an illiterate wharf rat to get information." He stopped and looked across the room to the door where Dermott stood with a satchel in his hand. "Ah, Dermott, you have Cobby's dunnage, I see. Bring it in, man. Many a life's secret is squirreled away among one's belongings."

Cork was striving for the poetic because the pitiful pile of goods that were dumped out on the table depicted a sad life indeed. Along with a set of linen and some hose were a scarf, a housewife, and a battered book. I leafed through the book while Cork closely examined the other things.

"Well, here's where Cobby got all his pirate lore," I said, holding up the title page—gingerly, since the book's spine had been broken and the pages were loose. "*A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* by Captain Charles Johnson—1724."

"In reality, written by none other than Daniel Defoe of *Robinson Crusoe* fame," Cork said. "The cinnabar scent on these clothes corroborates his stay in the Bahamas."

"Here's more substantial proof, Captain," I said as I came across some foolscap tucked in between the pages. "It looks like a fair copy of some records—Aha, here's the answer to Cobby's interest in the Trepassi raid. It's the tally sheet of a pirate share-out following an auction in New York."

"Nothing strange in that, Oaks. New York was a major brokerage for pirate ships."

"Yes, sir, but this record shows that all crew members got their shares at New York except for Captain Roberts, who took his double share in advance—in gold coin." I made a rapid calculation in my head. "Black Bart had close to 20,000 pounds due him, and Cobby must have deduced that the pirate had secreted it somewhere between Trepassi and New York. Not a bad cache to dig up."

"Yes, if the cache and that fair copy of the share-out are true, but these taint the bait." He had unrolled Cobby's housewife, and there, along with shaving gear and mending needles and thread, were four crucifixes like the one found in Cobby's pocket.

"Good Lord, Captain, if they're diamonds, those crosses must be worth a fortune."

"Let's test them then," he replied sceptically. Taking them, including the one he found on the body, to the window, he scratched each on a glass pane.

"I fear they are all cheap trinkets, Oaks."

"Perhaps he purchased them along the way as props for his play about Black Bart."

"Props. Hmmm." Cork lost himself in thought for a moment. "Damnation," he said, "the tide's already turning and I must get a letter written. Oaks, fetch a boy to take a letter to the Port Captain, will you?"

As I started to go belowstairs, I looked at him and asked, "Do you think there is time to stop him?"

"Stop whom?"

"Boggs, of course."

"Oaks, you're an ass. I said Boggs will return and he will. Now I want to find out where the sixth crucifix is."

The next day's newspapers reported the strange deaths with various levels of accuracy. Some saw a pirate armada due to sack the town at any moment while others took solace in the fact that the famous detector, Captain Jeremy Cork, had the case in hand. What they didn't report was that the intrepid fact-finder, the tireless seeker of justice, was back to his New York sleep-till-noon schedule. Although I despise his wasting time with these puzzles, it becomes even more annoying when he dawdles on his way to a solution.

By one o'clock, when the rest of creation had half its day's chores done, Cork started to work. "Work" is used here as a euphemism to describe a very tall man sitting at a plate of oysters interviewing a parade of people summoned to our rooms.

First came van Gaus, who recited a litany of negative results, major among them being that no one could be found who had seen Waychurch and Cobby alive after they had left the Mourful Swan together following the salmagundi breakfast. According to Dermott, the two men had drunk quite a bit of rum well into the afternoon and had staggered off into the dusk.

"If the bodies hadn't been lashed together," van Gaus conjectured, "I would have seen the whole affair as two drunks falling into the river and being swept away, or as the result of a waterfront brawl. The damn killer should have left well enough alone instead of taking a pirate's revenge and stirring us all up."

Cork chuckled at the official's irritation. "To be sure, Sheriff. Have we any more information on the tides and the merchantman which found the floating bodies?"

"Barstow, the Port Captain, and Chinpy, the victualling agent up at the East River dockyards, await your pleasure, Captain Cork."

Of the two men who were shown into our rooms, Chinpy, the victualling agent, looked the more appropriate to his profession, for his girth was close to matching the mammoth van Gaus. Barstow, on the other hand,

would have looked more at home in a pulpit—his shy, retiring demeanor was not in keeping with the foul-tempered, bellow-lunged Port Captains of our acquaintance. Asked about the bodies taking two days to come downriver to the open harbor, he replied in a soft-toned voice, "Oh, nothing strange about that. There are many slips and piers along the river where a body could get snagged."

"Bodies, in this case," Cork said, "but you gentlemen know your local waters better than I. Mr. Barstow, I am given to understand that *Angela* made port three days before the bodies were found."

"On time, as usual, sir. Although I have no control over naval vessels, Captain Boggs is courteous enough to inform me of his movements about the harbor. He refitted for two days up at the yards and then moved to the Buttermilk."

This brought a hearty chuckle from Chinpy, which built into a roar when van Gaus joined in. These two behemoths were capable of tremoring the house down. "Doesn't take much courtesy to talk to your own brother-in-law, Barstow," Chinpy needled.

The Port Captain stiffened his reserve. "Even if Captain Boggs had not done me the honor of marrying my sister, Mr. Chinpy, I can assure you he would still accord courtesy at every chance. He, sir, is a model King's officer."

"True enough, true enough," Chinpy said in appeasement. "A fine officer who deserves a better billet, but ain't it the way with those of us who serve the admiralty's every want and whim. Here I sit with an expensively bid-for contract calling for supplying an entire squadron and all I get to service is two dinky sloops. And all because his Lordship, the Admiral, is smitten with some dark-eyed lady of the tropics. I could be feeding and quipping 22 ships, one a first-rater. Ah well, no sense complaining. Boggs is a fine fella, he is, and this is fine Apple Knock."

Boggs is a fine fellow, van Gaus is a fine fellow, Chinpy is a fine fellow. It seems everyone on the King's payroll is a fine fellow—when the Knock is free.

"The ship that found the bodies was coming out of port, Captain Barstow. How long was she here?"

Barstow searched his memory for a moment and then, as if reading from an unseen page, rattled off times, dates, detailed descriptions, and other official minutiae which boiled down to the bare bones that the Portugese trader *Golden Arrow* had been in port a week refitting at

Chinpy's after a battering Atlantic crossing. She was under the command of a Pedro Vegon and bound 'round the Cape to the Pacific trade.

"Armed?" Cork asked.

"Two nines and six swivel guns," Chinpy reported, "but she was not a pirate, if that's what you're thinking, Captain Cork."

"I'll vouch for that," Barstow said. "Vegon looked an oily fellow, but he had legitimate trading goods on board."

"I'm sure he did," Cork said, ending the interview. "By the way, how old would you say Captain Vegon was?"

Both men regarded each other. "Mid-forties?" Chinpy proffered, and Barstow concurred.

"Too young for Black Bart," I ventured into Cork's silent thinking when they left, along with the Sheriff.

"Yes, Oaks, but foreign vessels off to the Pacific, probably never to return to these parts for years, make for interesting consideration."

A glance out our windows showed that day had slipped into near dusk. And not a coin had been turned to our enterprise. I was determined to make the remaining time profitable, so I excused myself from the pensive detector and withdrew. I spent the next three hours in pleasant commerce about the town. I received good value for ten barrels of talc, fresh from Cork's Massachusetts mill, from a warehouser out in the west ward. The choclit output of our Connecticut mill brought a good price and the spermacite candles from Rhode Island were always welcomed along John Street.

When I arrived back at the Mournful Swan and was mounting the outside stairs to the rear rooms, Tom, the ostler's boy, ran up and handed me an envelope. "Din' say from who, sor—no name, jest give it to Capt'in Cork, he said, sor."

Well, a ha'penny will buy a child's silence, so no use questioning. I proceeded to our rooms with the envelope. Five minutes later, Cork had read and turned the message over to me:

Captain Jeremy Cork

Honorable Sir:

Evidential information awaits you concerning the Mungo Waychurch affair at 7 Warren Street this evening at 9.

Yr. Ob. sv.

A Friend

"If we're going, I'd best get the pistols," I said. "The Scottish regimentals will have to serve, since the Kilty brace is back in Philadelphia."

"Why go armed, Oaks?"

"To Warren Street? Great Jehovah, that low neighborhood is a mean place for gentlemen to walk about!"

"And yet a gentleman bids our company—a lawyer, if I read his use of words correctly."

St. Paul's bells were tolling nine as our hired calash turned into Warren Street from north Broad Way. It was a despicable neighborhood lined with filthy shanties and rigajig houses that served as the hovels for docksmen, draymen, minor mechanics, and their sprawling families. Even at this hour, hordes of children ran amid the darkened streets. As we pulled up to number seven, Cork said, "You needn't wait, driver. That closed coach ahead will take us the rest of the way."

True enough, a coach and four stood ominously out of place in the squalor, its lanterns attracting night insects and curious children to taunt the coachman.

As we approached, Cork took some coppers from his pocket and jiggled them in his cupped hands. "One for the money, two for the show, three to make ready, and off you go."

He flung the coins to a nearby stoop and the urchins scrambled after the clatter.

The coach door opened and a voice from its dark interior said, "Captain Cork?"

"Yes, accompanied by a trusted friend."

"Very good, sir. Would you kindly get in?"

We mounted the step, Cork boldly going first, I following a bit trepidatiously but aided by the confidence of the primed Scottish regimental pistol I had secreted in my coat pocket without the Captain's knowledge.

We sat in the dark opposite a cloaked figure who knocked at the roof of the coach with a cane. The vehicle sprang forward.

"Thank you for coming, sirs," the voice said. "I think my impartations will be of interest."

"Since I am both literally and figuratively in the dark, it is most likely," Cork said.

"First, however, a prolusion. Would, say, a gratuity of 10,000 pounds

dissuade you from further examination of the case involving Mungo Way-church?"

My heart started a quick pulsation. 10,000 pounds! For doing nothing! "Why use the word 'gratuity' when 'bribe' will do, sir?" Cork retorted in a voice free from indignation but loaded, like my pistol, with dangerous intent. "My eyes can't see you, but my nose and ears are in Bristol fashion, I assure you. Your cologne is an essence of cinnabar and orange water; your speech, Inns of Court; your handwriting, English public school; and the curious way you form the numeral seven with a cross-hatch tells me that you have traveled on the Continent. The cane, since you steady your seating with it, denotes age, not foppery. So let's sum you—

"A British barrister long transplanted to the Bahamas, possibly over fifty, no less. You are clean-shaven and had mutton with garlic sauce for dinner, which is not to treat your gout kindly. Oh, yes, I must add that if you are to carry a pistol pray don't stow it in your coattail pocket. It's uncomfortable and makes you squiggle on your seat. My foolish friend here took the same precaution to come armed, but he had the good sense to use his side pocket."

Damn him!

"Enough sir, enough," the voice said tiredly. "I was told you were a caution, but this is extraordinary. Truly a performance."

"And yours too, sir. When we entered the coach, we quickly turned right, putting us northward on the Greenwich Road, then we turned right again, sending us east, and now we turn again, going south. We seem to be traveling in circles, sir."

A quick match struck, illuminating the coach's interior. A shaking hand touched the flame to an oil fitment and gave us the look of each other. By jing, Cork's nose and ears were correct. He was an infirm, elderly man with a touch of grandeur to his patrician face, well abetted by the finery of his gold-lace lapels and egret-trimmed cockade. He leaned forward over the support of his magnificent cane as he spoke.

"Palsy, not gout, more's the worse. I'd hate to have you on my track in the wilds, sir. Davish here, the Honorable Mortimer Davish of New Providence, and former undersecretary to the Royal Governor of the Bahamas."

"Do you act for the King?"

"No, Captain Cork, it's a private solicitation, but of no minor import, mind. Your detecting tenacity is well known hereabouts and you could

accidentally destroy—certain reputations, with your inquiry. Perhaps I put the word 'gratuity' haphazardly."

"No harm," Cork assured him with a casual air that signified we were bidding 10,000 pounds adieu. "You obviously represent former pirates. Now, sir, let us not keep going in circles within the coach as well as without. No legal quibbling and endless colloquy, please. One of my first suspicions was that Cobby and Waychurch were killed because some people thought the advertisement was an open threat of blackmail. How many are there, sir?"

"Seven in all—innocent of these killings. All young boys then who have since made their marks in God's righteous world and have paid for their sins in charitable works."

"Well, they will pay some more, Sir Mortimer, and pay well, but not to me. Before dawn, I want a subscription taken in the amount of 50,000 pounds to be pledged to the erection of a school and hospital for the children of Warren Street. The pledge is to be signed by your seven clients."

"But you will know, then, who they are!"

"If they don't sign, I'll find them anyway. Isn't that why you were sent to me? To protect their names?"

"Yes."

"Then their names will be protected. The pledges will be deposited with the Dean of St. Paul's, who will send me a fair copy."

"But this could be a trap, Captain Cork. Any time you cared to you could—"

"Expose them? Yes, but I won't because I believe you, Sir Mortimer. Now one important point on which I demand candor. Did you send Waychurch to the Mournful Swan after the advertisement appeared?"

The old barrister, obviously rankled by *his* being cross-examined for a change, answered hesitantly. "Yes. You see, the newspaper notice did lead my clients to believe that someone from the old days had showed up who could recognize them. I paid the peg-legged man to attend and report on the advertiser's intent. He never returned."

"Were any of your clients known to Waychurch from the old days?"

"No, I made quite sure of that before selecting him. He was ideal for my purpose because his own background would enable him to spot an impostor."

"You sent only *one* emissary to the breakfast?"



"Yes. You seem disappointed, sir."

"It just creates another loose string. No mind. If you'll signal your driver, we can get out here. I'll expect that list."

"You'll get it, sir," Sir Mortimer assured him. "Of course, the price is stiff, but what can they do?" And then, as an afterthought, he said, "I, too, am at your mercy, since I'm a member of the bar. But I know I am not shielding the killers of those two men. If they had a hand in it, why would they make it look like a pirate execution and stir up all this ruckus?"

"To be sure. The children of Warren Street thank you and your clients, sir. Good evening."

To my surprise, we alighted not more than two blocks from our lodgings, and I attempted to fall in step as best I could, considering Cork's impossibly long stride. "When you said Cobby was looking for *treasure* after our breakfast meeting, I see now that you meant blackmail. I'd give anything to have been a fly on the wall after we left for the copper mine. Do you think these ex-pirates will send you the subscription list?"

"I believe so."

"Well, if playwrighting is out and blackmail is out, for what possible reason could they have been killed?" We were turning into the Swan's common-room door when I waxed poetic. "Perhaps our list of clues is incomplete—like Dermott's salmagundi."

Cork is normally good-humored and appreciates well wrought phrases, but not this time. He paused in his stride for a second and then continued into the inn in a fit of silence that usually proceeds a solution.

However, if there was a solution locked somewhere in his brain he was having trouble finding the key. One day, a week, ten days flitted by while he ate oysters, occasionally read Cobby's pirate book, and incessantly tied various mariner's knots in the roping from the peg-leg package. Even van Gaus must have been disgusted with him, for the Sheriff stopped coming to our rooms after Cork's first few days of indulgence.

Finally, on the fourteenth day I decided it was time to prod him. It was ten in the morning and, lo and behold, he was up and about. His rising was followed shortly by Dermott who, with the help of the tapman, began to lay a sumptuous sideboard of Apple Knock, wines, rum, sweet-cakes, pots of small beer, and a great pot of salmagundi.

"Oh, are we having guests?" I asked. "Or is this one of your symbolic gestures? And why have we wasted all this time, if you have the answer?"

My words were punctuated by the booming report of naval cannon. Not just one, but many, as ships entered the upper harbor. Their salutes were met in kind by a sixteen-gun salvo from the fort at the Battery.

"My, my," Cork said after counting the sixteenth report. "An Admiral, no less."

With this, the door opened and in came a breathless van Gaus. "Right on the mark," he puffed and poured himself some rum. "Cork, you're a wonder, a pure wonder. How did you know it would be twelve ships, and not six, or sixty?"

"Pure speculation, and a fair knowledge of naval tactics, Sheriff. The note was taken out to them?"

"The moment they were sighted. The others will be here presently."

They? Others? Had I been wrong? All the time I thought Cork had just been sitting practicing his knot-tying he was actually waiting for events to fall into place, and obviously now they had. I had not long to wait for an answer to 'they' and 'others.' The they arrived first in the person of Sir Percy Grice, Admiral of the White, followed by his flag lieutenant, Captain Boggs, and *Angela's* bosun's mate, fidgeting nervously in his tight shoes. The others turned out to be Port Captain Barstow and the victualling agent, Chinpy. Dermott himself passed the drinks.

Admiral Grice was in no mood for partying, which he made plain enough.

"I'm not used to being summoned ashore, Captain Cork, but your note said it was admiralty business, so here I am. I suggest you be quick about it—I have some pirate business on my hands."

"My apologies, Sir Percy, but I think you will find that your trip ashore is worth the effort."

"Out with it then."

That's all Cork needed: a stage of sorts, an audience, and a plot to unfold—and unfold he did after reviewing all the facts in the case thus far for the Admiral.

"So let us amass the evidence—an advertisement, a wooden leg, a set of crucifixes, a share-out sheet of pirate treasure, a piece of roping, and a salmagundi without mangoes."

"And a pirate execution," Admiral Grice hastened to add.

"Yes, or so we have been led to believe. But first things first. Why did Cobby place the breakfast-invitation advertisement? Playwrighting? Pure rot. The duplicate crosses and share-out sheet show only one thing, Mr.

Cobby was a confidence man, a schemer selling false treasure information to the unwary. This is confirmed by a response to a letter sent with the Port Captain's help by coaster to Charleston, Cobby's first port of call after Provincetown." He looked at me directly. "The sixth crucifix, Oaks. If a man had crosses made to resemble Black Bart's, wouldn't he do it in round lots? A half dozen or even a dozen? The sixth, or rather the first, was used in Charleston.

"The publisher of the *Charleston Courier* advises me that a similar advertisement appeared in his paper, and that a local citizen was gulled out of sixty pounds and left with a worthless map and crucifix for his money. Had Cobby lived, he would doubtless have placed his notice in more popular New York newspapers and attracted more flies into his web."

"Are you saying," the Admiral queried, "that he was killed by a bilked client, and not pirates?"

"No. He didn't have time to work his scheme here. I'm sure he'd have attempted to gull me, but Dermott went and introduced me as a detector, so Cobby hid behind the playwright ruse."

"What about the peg-legged fellow?"

"Admiral, at this point, I can only tell you what I surmise. The old salt was an innocent bystander who was swept up in the plot."

So, I thought, he was going to keep his word to Sir Mortimer and not divulge that Waychurch was his agent, although I hadn't seen the Warren Street subscribers list as yet.

"Let me show you the next bit of evidence," Cork said. "A piece of roping, part of the line used to lash the bodies together." He passed the rope he had used to secure the peg-leg package and on which he had been doing knot-tying exercises.

"Looks like common line to me," Grice said.

"Would you examine it more closely, Admiral? I made the same error of seeing it merely as a piece of line."

The Admiral took the rope in his hands and ran his thumb over the frayed end. "This is what bound the bodies?"

"It is, sir. For those here not of the sea, would you explain?"

"It's a piece of admiralty gear," the Admiral recited with the well schooled memory of his midshipman days. "Termed *small stuff*, as all roping below an inch in diameter is. All admiralty lines—small stuff, hawser, cable—contain a rogue's yarn, a colored thread woven into a line

to denote the ropewalk of origin, that it is the King's property. This particular rogue's yarn is green, which is the product of—" He looked at his flag lieutenant.

"The Stacy Yards, New Bedford, sir."

"Confound it, Cork, are you telling me a naval vessel is mixed up in all this?"

"In a manner of speaking, twenty-two naval vessels are involved. Captain Boggs, what color rogue's yarn do you carry?"

"Well, it's hardly the kind of detail that stays in one's head, Cork," he said defensively. Then he looked at his bosun, who didn't seem anxious to speak.

"Well, Miggs, speak up. You wouldn't be shaming me in front of the Admiral. In fact, I believe that's why Captain Cork's letter to the flagship requested your presence here."

It was a most uneasy fellow who spoke. "Blue, sor, blue throughout the ship. We refitt'd at Spithead afore settin' to the 'merican patrol and every line and lashin' was logged in property book right an' proper. There's no waste lines in *Angela*, sor, and I'll kick the—"

"Thank you, Miggs," Captain Boggs said, cutting off a mounting enthusiasm. "It was quite clever of you to see the rogue's yarn, Cork. I should have myself."

"I didn't at first. It was mere chance that I used the line to tie up the peg leg. I also owe you an apology, Captain Boggs. For a while I considered that you yourself might have lashed the bodies together to get the Admiral's attention. But even if *Angela*'s roping had a green rogue's yarn instead of blue it would have been implausible that you would have used admiralty gear."

The Admiral was taken aback that one of his squadron officers had been under suspicion, and Cork brought up the pin-pricks on the charts. This greatly amused Boggs and he turned to his lieutenant. "Tell the poor man, Flags."

"Aye, sir," Flags said, trying to suppress a smile. "It's common knowledge around the squadron that Boggs believes pirate treasure can be found in these parts."

"And claimed for the Crown," Boggs hastened to add.

"Of course," Sir Percy said, retreating into his former stern demeanor, "but 'ell's bells, they were lashed with admiralty rope."

The flag lieutenant leaned over and whispered in his superior's ear.

The Admiral's eyes narrowed and he stared directly at Chinpy. "Well?" he demanded.

"I don't understand, sir," the agent said nervously. "My naval stores do have roping from New Bedford, but I'm at a loss to explain—unless, of course, it was stolen."

"In a sense, it was stolen," Cork assured him. "Stolen from the Crown and sold by you to foreign vessels along with God knows how many other pieces of admiralty property. I'm sure a detailed accounting will tell the tale."

"You see, Admiral, one detail in this case bothered me from the first. I found it hard to believe that a Portuguese Captain, anxious to make the tide and already a week behind schedule due to a bad Atlantic crossing, would take the time not only to stop and recover floating bodies but then actually to seek out a naval vessel moored in an off-the-roads channel to give the bodies to. I think you'll agree, sir, that masters of trading vessels rarely show that much civic concern."

"Damned right. Shifty lot, all of 'em."

"It is obvious," Cork continued; "that the foreign Captain knew exactly where *Angela* was and made straight for her with his cargo of deceit. His only mistake was in lashing the bodies together with his 'new' line. You should have forewarned him, Chinpy, and your plot might have worked."

"Plot? What plot?"

"A plot, Admiral, to get your ships back in these waters where they would buy Chinpy's naval stores. By delivering 'evidence' of pirates' presence to a dedicated officer, there was every hope that he would dash to report to his Admiral. And he did, and here you are."

"Well, I'll be damned," Sir Percy said with amazement.

"Of course, Captain Cork," Chinpy said with a trace of regained composure, "everything you have said is pure conjecture. It's your word against mine."

"True, Chinpy, true. The Portuguese vessel is long gone, but perhaps the Admiral will hunt him down. It might make an excellent assignment for Captain Boggs. Of course, your books will prove shortages, since you never expected an audit."

"Hardly a hanging offense," Chinpy said with more hope than surety.

"True again, but interfering with the mission of an Admiral is, and, of course, so is murder."

"I didn't kill those men. I swear it, Sir Percy, and throw myself on your

mercy. I found those bodies separately, snagged under my dock. I didn't know they had anything to do with the advertisement, but I had read it, and seeing one had a peg leg I got the idea for a pirate scare. I'm a poor man, Sir Percy. I have invested heavily in naval stores and had no one to buy them. It was a mad plan, but I was desperate. I do solemnly swear, however, that I have not done murder. Fate put those corpses in my path."

The Admiral looked at Cork, who said, "I'm inclined to believe him, Sir Percy. The pirate ruse could have been constructed only if two bodies were available, and Chinpy had no way of knowing the fortuitous happenstance of the peg-legged man showing up. I can attest that Chinpy did not send Waychurch to the breakfast. Fate played into his hands with two bodies at his dockside—and then pulled his luck away with the rogue's yarn mix-up. No, Chinpy did not kill the two men."

"Then who in sweet heaven did?" demanded Sir Percy with exasperation.

"Until this very morning, Admiral, I could give you only a guess, but through Sheriff van Gaus's vigilance we now have our killer in hand. Thanks to the insight of my associate, Mr. Oaks, we were able to pinpoint the culprit."

I would dearly have loved to express a self-satisfied look, but I was at a loss as to how I had helped.

Cork came to the rescue.

"Two phrases, Oaks. One, 'a fly on the wall.' Two, 'an incomplete salmagundi.' All right, Sheriff."

The door was opened and there stood Mary, the serving girl, with a look of scornful hate on her face. "Gentlemen," Cork said, "may I introduce Mary Bonnard, as she calls herself. Her grandmother is none other than Anne Bonnie."

"The female pirate?" the Admiral said.

"The same. According to a certain Bahamian K.C., she was captured with Calico Jack Rackman and escaped hanging due to pregnancy."

Well, obviously Sir Mortimer had been consulted but why would Mary kill two men merely because one of them had called her grandmother a slut? And if the old lady had had a belly-pardon, what had she to fear?

"You see, Anne Bonnie clung to her evil ways, and has been the fulcrum of the smuggling rings the good Sheriff has been plagued with of late.

The contraband found at her house on Division Hill proves that beyond any doubt."

I couldn't control the urge and bluntly said, "I fail to see what smuggling had to do with an advertisement about pirates."

"Look again, Oaks. I said earlier that Cobby's notice was provocative. A hint of piracy in the area might bring in a stronger naval patrol force, which the smugglers couldn't afford to let happen. Mary was sent to see what Cobby was up to, decided that the Londoner was dangerous, and lured him and Waychurch to their deaths. With sweet irony, Chinpy found the bodies, and instead of the deaths being put down to a dockside brawl he elevated it into an action which achieved exactly what the smugglers didn't want, an adequate complement of naval vessels on local patrol."

The Admiral cleared his throat uneasily, got to his feet, congratulated Cork, and asked, "How did you trap her?"

"The mangoes. That morning in these very rooms, Mary got cheeky and told Dermott that mangoes were available at Grangers stall. Mangoes in local cooking are a rarity, and I wondered if our serving girl had ever made salmagundi. So a sheriff's aide has been stationed at Grangers for days. Finally Mary showed up. It seems her grandmother has not lost her taste for the stuff and has it regularly. Too regularly, in this case."

It was two days later when we finally got back to normal. Cork had been feted aboard the Admiral's flagship, and again by the Sheriff at a special dinner of the Thursday Club. While we dined among that august body of men, I had to force myself not to stare at several of the club's luminaries, who were being congratulated on their generosity to the new Warren Street Children's Fund.

I just happened to mention to His Nibs over his morning oysters that Cobby might have inadvertently been onto something with the Black Bart cypher.

"Oh, it's a treasure cypher all right, Oaks, no doubt about it," he said. "It's just that the wrong interpretation was put to it. It really isn't that complex."

"Do you mean to tell me you've figured it out? Good Lord, Cork, where? Where in New England?"

"That's where it's all wrong. Now if you take the flag symbol literally and put the right foot on the Bahamas and the left foot on Martinique,

you'll find the sword points due west to the Leeward Islands—probably Canouan Isle."

"You're sure? I mean, we could—" Oh no, I told myself. This was another of his tricks to get rid of me. He'd say it's all mine and expect me to run off with a shovel and get out of his hair. Well, Wellman Oaks sticks to his bargain. I'll make him the richest man in the Americas in spite of himself.

By the way, Sir Mortimer Davish has become quite a friend and I fully plan—once we are on more intimate terms—to ask him, as a man of the world, about this "lady's rule" business.

**You'll find NEW stories in every issue. The stories are great. They're twisty. They often frighten people. Especially adults.**

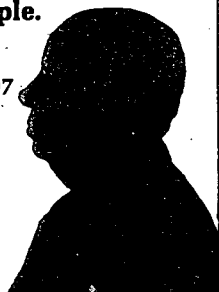
**New Subscribers Only.**

☐ Bill me \$6.97 for 6 issues  
(outside U.S.A. & poss., \$8.00)

☐ I enclose \$6.97

I prefer to use MASTER CHARGE or VISA credit card; however, only the longer term below is available:

☐ Send me 12 issues for \$13.94  
(outside U.S.A. & poss., \$16.00)



Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(please print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**TO: ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE**

**Box 1932 Marion, Ohio 43305**

**D1DS84**





# CRIME ON SCREEN

---

**by Peter Christian**

It is London, 1940. The dock areas are an inferno of fire and smoke. Most of the men hurrying through the streets are in uniform. A newscaster's voice is heard crackling somberly over the wireless: "Around me the city is in flames. The young men of the Royal Air Force are fighting in the skies against the Nazi might. . . ." Our attention focuses on the cheery, affable, unobtrusive stationmaster, Faber, as British as a pint of bitter, chatting with enlistees and his landlady about rations and meat pies, riding his bicycle home through streets clogged with transports moving essential war material. The next moment he is up in his rented room, transmitting on a hidden radio to Berlin news of troop shipments, destination Finland. And when his landlady has the misfortune to enter the room, unannounced he coolly stabs her through the heart with his snap-knife. For Faber is in reality "The Needle," German superspy at loose in England, and the protagonist of Ken Follett's bestselling novel, *Eye of the Needle*, now made into a genuinely suspenseful film thriller.

We are, at the same time as we are introduced to Faber, made aware of several other individuals who will dramatically cross his life: young Billy Parkin, not yet old enough to enlist yet aching to be part of his country's struggle, and the radiant Lucy, about to be married to her fighter-pilot fiancé, David. We cut from Faber's more nefarious activities to Lucy's English garden wedding, David's fellow officers toasting the bride and groom as the pair, giddy with champagne and happiness, speed away in a roadster. There is a turn in the road, a van bears down on them, and then an accident.

Four years later the narrative continues. Lucy, David, and their small son now live on a sheep farm on a remote island off the British coast. David has lost both legs in the car crash. His military career over, he is broody and defeated. Lucy—worn, neglected—tries to make a life for herself and the child in this far outpost, appropriately named Storm Island: the only other inhabitant is an ancient lighthouse-keeper. Meanwhile, The Needle has become legendary; he is targeted by British Intelligence as the most sought-after German spy at large in England. No one knows what he looks like—except for Billy Parker, now a soldier, who had befriended the bogus stationmaster years before. He is called in to pore over photographs of German officers, and finally spots The Needle—as the son of a Baron, an elite young spymaster brought up in English schools who could easily pass for British and move unnoticed anywhere. And The Needle is moving. For he has uncovered one of wartime England's most outrageous deceptions.

And, actually, the secret deception was historically quite real. As Ken Follett relates: "Early in 1944 German Intelligence was piecing together evidence of a huge army in southeastern England. Reconnaissance planes brought back photographs of barracks and airfields and fleets of ships in the Wash. General George Patton was seen in his unmistakable pink jodhpurs walking his white bulldog. There were bursts of wireless activity, signals between regiments in the area. Confirming signs were reported by German spies in Britain.

"There was, however, no army. The ships were rubber-and-timber fakes, the barracks no more real than a movie set. Patton didn't have a single man under his command, the radio signals were meaningless, the spies were double agents. The object was to fool the enemy into preparing for an invasion via the Pas de Calais, so that on D-Day the Normandy assault would have the advantage of surprise. It was a huge, near-impossible deception. Literally thousands of people were involved in perpetrating the trick: It would have been a miracle if none of Hitler's spies ever got to know about it." Actually, Follett reminds us, despite almost a national paranoia about "fifth columnists," Britain had succeeded in rounding up most foreign agents by the end of 1939. But to crack open a secret "it only needs one spy. . . ."

Follett postulates The Needle as that one determined secret agent. On a photographic reconnaissance of a supposedly secret field of British fighter planes, he discovers—to his surprise—the aircraft are hollow and

made of plywood. He immediately realizes the mock planes are a clever ruse: the real invasion will begin elsewhere, more than likely Normandy. He rushes to the north of England to a rendezvous with a German submarine, but is forced to kill a few people en route, making British Intelligence aware of his dangerous knowledge. Needle manages to evade their pursuit, but a sudden, violent squall at sea diverts his small motor launch from the U-Boat he is trying to meet to the rocks of Storm Island. There, his craft smashed, the half drowned German agent is rescued by an unsuspecting husband and wife.

Donald Sutherland gives an extraordinary portrayal of the cruel but engaging spymaster, reminding us how often he has pleased us before. In Daphne du Maurier's *Don't Look Now* he was the tormented father seeing death in the canals of Venice. He was pursued by aliens in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. He was one of the plotters of *The Great Train Robbery*. As the elusive Needle he is a superb romantic villain. Playing the woman with whom he shares a surprising destiny, Canadian Kate Nelligan is also outstanding. You will remember her as one of the victims of Frank Langella's *Dracula* and as the smoldering Émile Zola heroine of the BBC-TV production of *Therese Racquin* (shown in this country on PBS recently), seducing her lover into a murder. As the emotion-starved Lucy, slowly surrendering to a man she will shortly discover to be her country's enemy, Nelligan's character often suggests the indomitable British wartime spirit, and is meant to. She is in many ways a Mrs. Miniver—and, you will recall, Miniver too discovered a German in her garden.

The blitz-torn London of the war years is superbly brought back by *Eye of the Needle*'s production design: the smoky railway stations, the crowded troop trains, the military bustle of the streets, the dimmed theaters and propaganda billboards (HITLER WILL SEND NO WARNING—ALWAYS CARRY YOUR GAS MASKS). Everything about the film evokes past cinematic memories, like a newsreel of melodrama. Although the plots are dissimilar, the relationships in *Eye* interestingly parallel for a bit Conrad Veidt's romantic longings in *The Spy in Black*, another secret agent unexpectedly diverted by a local girl (Valerie Hobson). This fateful alliance is set as well in a remote Atlantic community—the Orkney Islands—and the clouds of tragedy are ominous.

The aristocratic German agent able to wear an English mask undetected is a fond device, harking back to E. Phillips Oppenheim's *The Great*

*Impersonation* and much of Fritz Lang. Remember the suave, evil George Sanders of *Man Hunt*, uttering with perfect British accent his Prussian disdain for English ideals of sportsmanship: "We play the game to win, Thorndyke!" Spies could infiltrate the very highest levels of English life, as in *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*, where Sir Evan Barham of the Inner Council (Reginald Denny) is revealed as a wartime traitor. But this is not actually treason, Holmes reveals, for Sir Evan is *not* Sir Evan. "In March 1918 Lieutenant Evan Barham was a prisoner in a German prison camp. There his amazing resemblance to a certain Heinrich von Bork, a brilliant young member of the German Secret Service, sealed young Barham's fate"—the start of a cunning twenty-year masquerade. Faber, *The Needle*, a German Baron's son and English chameleon, is part of this melodrama elite. And the insidious infiltration of enemy agents into the more remote British islands reminds us, as well, of such classic films as *Cottage to Let* and *Went the Day Well?*

Much of the rich tapestry of the Follett novel was trimmed for the film, and he is understandably somewhat dismayed by the absence of several major characters and the book's middle section. But what remains of *Eye of the Needle* has solid strength. When, towards the final heart-pounding moments of the movie version, when on the black rocks of that storm-swept island Faber turns to Lucy and says, "The war has come down to the two of us," we of the audience are carried back as in the grip of a churning sea to a turbulent, heroic time of cinematic espionage—a time where a spy can confess (and Faber actually utters this familiar refrain): "I did what I had to do." Byronic secret agents, this is your movie.



# ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 1930 • Marion, OH 43305

New Subscribers Only.

☐ Send me 7 issues of EQMM for Only \$7.97!  
(a savings of \$1.48 off the newsstand price)

☐ Double my savings—14 issues for \$15.94!

Outside U.S.A. and possessions:

7 issues \$9.72 14 issues \$19.44

☐ Payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed. ☐ Bill me later.

☐ Charge to my ☐ VISA ☐ Master Charge

Card #

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

(Only the 14 Issues for \$15.94 can be charged to your bank cards.)

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of first issue.

D1DS9-8

*How to Order*

Spring-Summer 1981  
Edition Volume 8

alfred

# HITCHCOCK'S

anthology

☐ Enclosed is \$3.15 (\$2.50 plus 65¢ handling & postage) for each of \_\_\_\_\_ Alfred Hitchcock's Anthology(s) Volume #8.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Alfred Hitchcock's Anthology  
380 Lexington Avenue, NYC, NY 10017

# Classified

# MARKET

ALFRED HITCHCOCK is published 13 times a year. The rate for CLASSIFIED Ads is \$1.15 per word payable in advance—minimum ad \$17.25. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional.

## AUTHOR'S SERVICE

**LOOKING** For a publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for free booklet, HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

**AUTHORS** . . . We need your Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Juvenile and Scholarly Manuscripts for immediate publication. New and experienced writers send for FREE GUIDE-BOOK. Todd & Honeywell, Dept. D, 10 Cuttermill Road, Great Neck, New York 11021.

## AUTOMOBILE & MIDGET CARS

**"SECRET 200 MPG Carburetor Revealed!!!** Free Details! MFG-DPC 1181, Box 2133, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

## AVIATION

**ANTIGRAVITY PROPULSION DEVICE!** Free Brochure. RDA, Box 873, Concord, NC 28025.

## BLUEPRINTS, PATTERNS & PLANS

**NEW CRAFT PRINT CATALOG**—Choose from over 100 great easy-to-build plans. Send \$1.25 (completely refunded with your first order). **BOAT BUILDER**, (CP Div.)—380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10037.

## BOOKS & PERIODICALS

**FREE CATALOGUES**, hardbacks, paperbacks. Search Service, Detective Mystery Booksearch, Box 15460, Orlando, Florida, 32808.

**FREE** List! Used hardcover mystery detective fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, 251 Baldwin Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450.

**LARGE Catalog Free!** Mystery-suspense books: Save to 70%. Spencer Books, P.O. Box 15665, Santa Ana, CA 92705.

**ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE**, published monthly. Send \$17.50 for 13 issues to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 1930, Marion, OH 43305.

**BOOK BONANZA!!!** Super savings on all types . . . new, used, paperbacks, hardcovers. Free catalog. Hurry! Brown's 20116-A Satcoy, Canoga Park, CA 91306.

**SEARCH SERVICE:** Catalogs Issued. Mystery—Detective—Suspense—Speculative—Fantasy Fiction. First Editions. Reprints. Hardcover-paper. Mystery and Imagination Bookshop, P.O. Box 2074, Covina, CA 91722.

## BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

**MYSTERIES BY MAIL.** Huge selection. Paperback, hardback, related items. Send stamped envelope for catalog. Sherlock's Home, 5614 E. Second St., Long Beach, CA 90803.

**FREE CATALOGUE. OVER 300 BOOKS:** HOW-TO, SELF-IMPROVEMENT, GAMES, SPORTS, GAMBLING, MARRIAGE, OCCULT. GE LOUIS SMITH CO., BOX 137, ALTADENA, CA 91001.

**BELLY-busting**, "down home" entertainment for entire family. Guaranteed. \$8/1 year. Monthly Reward, Dept-AHI, 12404 Chelwood Trl. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112.

**FREE CANDY RECIPES** with booklet hot off the press telling everything you need to know to make perfect candy. Make candy for pleasure or make huge profits with your own confectionery. Now is the season. Send \$2.75 for booklet to "Candy Booklet," 740 Dogleg Road, Dept. B-7, Newark, Ohio 43055.

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

**FREE BOOK "2042"** Unique Proven Enterprises. "Fabulous 'unknowns,' second inflation income. Haylings-E12 Carlsbad, CA 92008.

**STAY HOME! EARN BIG MONEY** addressing envelopes. Genuine offer 10¢. Lindco, 3636-DA, Peterson, Chicago 60659.

**\$75.00/HUNDRED POSSIBLE STUFFING ENVELOPES! GUARANTEED PROGRAM.** Send stamped envelope: Nationwide, Box 58806, Dallas, TX 75258.

**BECOME** an ordained minister. Strat a non-profit organization. Many benefits! Credentials and information \$10.00. Universal Life Church, 1335 Seabright Ave (8M), Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

**DISTRIBUTORS. Immediate Cash Profits!** Revolutionary Automotive Bargain. Free Details. Motaloy, Box 457D9, Downey, CA 90241.

**"\$25.00/Hr. Possible Mailing Circulars Spare Time."** Rexson 28-01F, Box 1060, Orange Park, FL 32073.

**1000% Profit Bronzing or Chinakoting Baby Shoes.** Free Literature. NBSDG, 398 Sebring Airport, Sebring, FL 33870.

**EARN EXTRA INCOME**, put your typing skills to work. \$2.00 brings booklet containing complete information. Hood Enterprises, Dept. 124, P.O. Box 291, Powell, TN 37849.

**GET Rich in Mailorder.** Work home. Spare time. Details: Enoki, 5204G So. Berendo, Los Angeles, CA 90020.

# PLACE

# Classified

To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

**FREE** Details on making money at home. Send self addressed stamped envelope to: J. Buss, Dept. A, 3513-C Eisner Court, Sheboygan, WI 53081.

**GOOD INCOME WEEKLY** Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Information: Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DC3, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

**FREE** Booklet, inflation beater, work home. secrets revealed. Keystone Publications, P.O. 39. Old Bridge, NJ 08857.

**EARN \$2000** per month offering leases and loans to physicians and dentists. Details free. Write: Professional Capital, Dept. AH, 10880 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

**MAKE a Comeback!** Turn your life around. Details Free. Winner, Box 131, Mt. Carmel, PA 17851.

**INDEPENDENCE!!** FREE brochure! HOW-To Mailorder information. Industries best! Grant, Box 67H, Mansfield, AR 72944.

## DETECTIVES

**MAN SHOT—DOA.** Ever wonder how homicide cases are investigated and solved? Now you can get complete **HOMICIDE INVESTIGATIVE FILES** based on the experiences of big city homicide detectives, and fictionalized for your entertainment. Receive it all. Arrest Reports, Lab Reports, Court Reports. From start to dramatic successful conclusion. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Send Today! 1 case \$4.00; 3 cases \$10.00. Crime Reports, Suite 125, 3400 West 111th Street, Chicago, IL 60655.

## EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

**UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL!** Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-AH-11, Tustin, CA 92680.

**UNIVERSITY Degrees By Mail. EDUCATION,** 256 South Robertson. Dept. 25, Beverly Hills, CA 90211. (213) 652-6452.

**LEARN HOW To Make Money In Mail-order.** Dynamic home study program makes you professional in 16 weeks. Free Book! Mediastance 29-05M, 676 Kingsley, Orange-park, Florida 32073.

## EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

**FLORIDA SPACE CENTER EMPLOYMENT.** Detailed NASA employer information \$2.00. Florida Employment Research, P.O. Box 1942, Merritt Island, FL 32952.

## FOR THE HOME

**ELIMINATE ALL WORRIES** involving UP-KEEP and MAINTENANCE of YOUR HOME. Our GUIDE for the HOMEOWNER answers all questions. INVEST \$18.00 a year for SIX NEWSLETTERS prepared by a BUILDER with 30 years experience. Profit from PERSONAL / PROFESSIONAL approach to PRESERVING and IMPROVING your home. Send \$5.00 for sample copy. THE HOUSE DOCTOR, P.O. Box 2064, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

**USEFUL BEAUTIFUL ITEMS.** For COLORFUL DESCRIPTIONS & order information, send \$8.00 money order to "Buz," Box 9453, Rochester, New York 14604.

## GIFTS THAT PLEASE

**"MAGIC PENCIL"** makes food and drinks taste better! Lasts years. Guaranteed! Send \$7.98 ppd. Phlogistics, P.O. Box 1411, Ventura, CA 93002.

**PANTAR 5 function LCD Pen Watch** \$29.95. Entrekin, 1871 Tamarand Way, San Diego, CA 92154. Satisfaction Guaranteed.

## GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

**JEEPS — \$58.00 — CARS — \$35.00! — 700,000 ITEMS! — GOVERNMENT SURPLUS — MOST COMPREHENSIVE DIRECTORY AVAILABLE TELLS HOW, WHERE TO BUY — YOUR AREA — \$3 — MONEYBACK GUARANTEE — "SURPLUS INFORMATION SERVICES" BOX 99249-E11, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94109.**

## HYPNOTISM

**FREE** catalog. Hypnotism, self hypnosis, sleep learning, hypnotic tape cassettes. DLMH, Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

## IMPORT—EXPORT

**"MARKET 2500** amazing new Fast-Sellers without risk." Free Brochures. Brightco, Box 91309-N11, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.

## INVENTIONS WANTED

**MANUFACTURER** Seeking Inventions. Generous Royalties Offered. Advantek International, 1100 17th NW, Washington, DC 20036.

## LOANS BY MAIL

**GET** cash grants—from Government. (Never repay.) Also, cash loans available. All ages eligible. Complete information, \$2 (refundable). Surplus Funds-DG, 1629 K St., Washington, DC 20006.

# Classified Continued

## LOANS BY MAIL—Cont'd

"BORROW by mail! Signature loans. No collateral! Free Details. Write MBG-DPC1181, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870."

BORROW \$1,000-\$50,000 secretly—"overnight." Anyone! Credit unimportant. Repay anytime. Incredibly low interest. No interviews, collateral, cosigners. Unique "Financier's Plan." Full information, \$2 (refundable). Spectrum, 120 Wall St.-16, New York 10005.

THE ARABS HAVE MILLIONS TO LOAN. INVEST! FREE DETAILS! Arab-DP, 935 Main, Vidor, TX 77662.

BORROW \$25,000 "OVERNIGHT." Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report! Success Research, Box 29070-SY, Indianapolis, IN 46229.

QUICK MAILLOANS! FREE APPLICATION FORM AND COMPLETE DETAILS. RUSHED IMMEDIATELY! Lenco, Box 724-W11, McMinnville, Oregon 97128.

\$LOANS\$ on signature for any amount & purpose! Elite, Box 454-DG, Lynbrook, NY 11563.

## MAGIC TRICKS, JOKER NOVELTIES & PUZZLES

FOOL YOUR FRIENDS. Send them letters postmarked from Canada: SAE #9 in envelope #10, \$1.50 ea. Pierre Corriveau. POB #2099, Rock Forest, Que. JOB 2JO.

## MAIL-ORDER OPPORTUNITIES

LEARN HOW TO Make Money In Mail-order. Dynamic home study program makes you professional in 16 weeks. Free Book! Mediastance 28-03M, 676 Kingsley, Orange-park, Florida 32073.

## MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY . . . NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP, ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

## MISCELLANEOUS

SAVE! Fabulous Gems For Jewelry. Collecting! Gemcutter to You! Details Free. Taylor's, 113-A Martin, Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937.

TECHNICAL SECRETS—Electronic Surveillance, Lock-Picking, etc. Free brochures: Mentor-DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, NY 11354.

DUMP IT CAKE—FUN, Quick, Delicious. \$1.00 SASE—14702 Beach Ave., Irvine, CA 92714.

## MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth \$2.00 towards a classified ad in this publication. Send \$1.75 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

\$300 WEEKLY SPARE TIME — Mailing Salesletters. Details: Delta: Dept.-D, Box 2902-CRS, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

\$1500 WEEKLY POSSIBLE STUFFING ENVELOPES! GUARANTEED PROGRAM. Send stamped envelope: Financial, Box 34474, Louisville, KY 40232.

\$60.00/Hundred stuffing envelopes!! Offer-details RUSH stamped addressed envelope: IMPERIAL-P460, Box 17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

"\$25.00/Hr. Possible Mailing Circulars Spare Time." Rexson 28-02F, Box 1060, Orange Park, FL 32073.

CRIME PAYS! 150% Profit. Distribute Security Products. Free Catalog. Evergreen, Box 1320 (DP), Lakegrove, OR 97034.

\$15/Hour possible mailing circulars. Experience unnecessary. Free supplies. Publishers, 1619D Avocado, Melbourne, FL 32935.

APHRODISIACS; Bibliography, Compendium, Exciting Recipes. \$4.00 Moneymaking information enclosed. Halyung, Box 641T, Detroit Trolley Station, MI 48231.

DAILY income possible. 500 Mail Order Ideas \$5.00. Kuntry, Route 2 Box 122A Blue Street, Trussville, AL 35173.

FIND your fortune. Wealth building information. Details free. Write: Secrets, Box 131, Mt. Carmel, PA 17851.

RECEIVE 100 letters a day each containing \$1.00. Rush \$1.00 for plan. SASE. G. Shields, 1716 Ocean Avenue #78, S.F., CA 94112.

HOW TO become wealthy in the 80's. "Find the Money Tree." Roland Davis, 1506 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, CA. 94115.

## MOTION PICTURE PROJECTORS, FILMS, SLIDES & SUPPLIES

BREATHTAKING GLAMOUR SLIDES, CLASSIC NUDES. Catalog, six samples. \$3.00. Photographic Place, Box 806-AH, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

## OF INTEREST TO WOMEN

FREE CATALOG! Extra Income Reports: Anderson's, 2053 West 6000 South, Roy, Utah 84067.



# Classified Continued

## PERSONAL

**UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL!** Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-DP11, Tustin, CA 92680.

**HAVE CONFIDENTIAL CHICAGO MAILING ADDRESS** or branch office. Business, Personal; Since 1944! Mail Center, 323 (g) Franklin, Chicago 60606.

**ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE**, published monthly. Send \$13.94 for 12 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 1855 G.P.O., New York, NY 10001.

**SINGLE? WIDOWED? DIVORCED?** Nationwide Introductions! Hundreds of members! Identity, Box 315-DC, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

**BECOME A Legally Ordained Minister.** Free Details. ULC-DPM1181, Box 2133, Sandusky, OH 44870.

**MARRIAGE Minded Ladies** from the Far East. Thousands of Photos. Cherry Blossoms-DAV, Honokaa, HI 96727.

**MIGRAINE Headaches!** Stop the Misery. Stop the Drugs. Start Preventive Nutrition. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Instructions \$3.50 postpaid. Prevention Happy, Box 351-F, Lincoln, RI 02865.

**BECOME an ordained minister.** Ministerial credentials. Legalize your right to the title "Reverend." Write: Church of Gospel Ministry, 486CO, Skyhill Court, Chula Vista, CA 92010.

**USEFUL Knowledge Principles of Self Expression, Intimate Relationships, Non-verbal Communication, Persuasion, Conflict Solving.** Extensive References. \$3.95 Postpaid. James Evans, P.O. Box 445, Carson City, NV 89701.

**MAKE your own S & M Densitometer.** Send \$5.00 for detailed drawings and instructions. A must for successful photography in your darkroom. Order direct: S & M Instruments, Dept. AH11, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

**SINGLE? Meet that special person!** Very low fees. Free info, call DATELINE toll-free: 800-451-3245.

**FILIPINO Ladies** seek friendship, marriage. \$2.00 descriptions, details, photos. Sampa-guita, Box 742, Jasper, IN 47546.

## PERSONAL—Cont'd

**PSYCHIC** reader thru trance and psycho-metry. Send donation and possession for vibrations and self addressed stamped return envelope to Norman, 495 Ellis Street, #1992, San Francisco, CA 94102.

**ORIENTALS.** Malaysians, Indonesians, Thais, Filipinas need boyfriends, Husbands. Photos! Golden Heart, Box 2423, Yakima, WA 98901.

**SINGLE?** Meet sincere, beautiful, people like you, in your area! Lowest fees. Call free 1-800-643-8780.

**MINNESOTA RENTERS:** Cash Rebates for 1978, 1979, 1980. \$3000 Possible. Advocates. 822-4413. 3503 Columbus, Minneapolis, MN 55407. DEADLINE August 31.

**SINGLES?** Worldwide Introductions. Meet "new" singles. World, Box 685-HIT, Hemet, CA 92343.

**INTRODUCTION to Latin, Oriental, American ladies!** Free info: Venture Enterprises, Box 7087AH, Burbank, CA 91510.

## RADIO & TELEVISION

**CABLE TV DESCRABLERS and CONVERTERS. PLANS and PARTS.** Build or Buy: For information send \$2.00. C&D Electronics, P.O. Box 21, Jenison, MI 49428.

## RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

**FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc.** Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, New York 11209.

**"FASCINATING!!!"** Golden-era Mystery, Sci-Fi, etc. Radio Program Cassettes. "Out-standing Selection!" "Inexpensive!!" FREE Catalog: Heritage-DC, 412 Redbud, Oxford, MS 38655.

## SONGWRITERS

**POEMS WANTED:** Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE

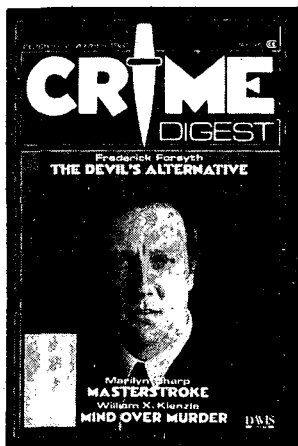
**MOONSTONE BOOKCELLARS, INC.,** 2145 Penn. Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20037. WASHINGTON'S only science and mystery specialty bookshop. 202-659-2600. Open seven days 11AM-6PM.

**PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR FICTION COMBINATIONS:**  
Mystery, Sci-Fi, or Special

**Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.**

**For further information write to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director,  
Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.**

# **NEW THIS FALL!**



## **The Best of the New Books**

**Yours for just \$7.97 with a  
CHARTER SUBSCRIPTION to**



It's where you'll find top-flight condensations of the best of the newly published and about to be published novels of crime, mystery, espionage and suspense. Featuring major new novels by best-selling authors. Including some still in the works!

**First Issue on Sale in September!**

**with**

**FREDERICK FORSYTH    MARILYN SHARP**

**The Devil's Alternative**

**Masterstroke**

**WILLIAM X. KIENZLE**

**Mind Over Murder**

**If you think that looks good, wait till you see what's coming up!**

**Subscribe Now and Enjoy Most Favorable Rates**

**for as Long as Subscription Continues!**

**DETAILS AND ORDER COUPON ON PAGE 68**

**DAVIS  
DIGESTS**

**LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG**

**ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED**

# Eberhart, Gardner, Christie, MacDonald, Cleary, Simenon, etc. 12 of their best \$1.

Now, as an introductory offer, you can get 12 full-length novels, including some of the finest mystery writing to appear in recent years, for only \$1.00.

You'll meet some of the greatest detectives who ever trapped a killer: Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, Travis McGee, Chief Superintendent Maigret, Perry Mason and others. You'll get involved in some of their most intriguing cases including: Nemesis, Halloween Party, A Purple Place for Dying, Maigret and the Apparition, The Case of the Postponed Murder. And that's just the beginning... see the complete list on the back cover.

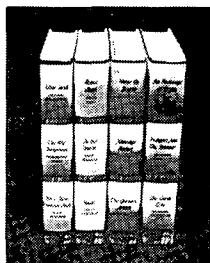
These spine-tingling mysteries cost \$82.95 in their publishers' editions. But you can get all 12 of them, in four handsome hardbound triple-volumes, for only \$1 as your introduction to The Detective Book Club.

As a member, you'll get, free, the club's monthly Preview, which describes in advance each month's selections. They're chosen by the club's editors, who select the best from more than 400 mysteries published each year. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it; there is no minimum number of books you must buy. And you may cancel your membership at any time.

When you accept a club selection, you get three complete, full length detective novels in one hardcover triple-volume like the ones shown on this page for only \$7.49. That's at least a \$6 saving per mystery if you were to buy them separately in the publishers' original editions.

Recent selections have included new thrillers by top names like those featured above, plus Len Deighton, Dick Francis, and many others. Start enjoying the benefits of membership in The Detective Book Club. Send no money now. You'll be billed later for your 12 mysteries. Send the coupon today to: The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

FILL OUT COUPON. CLIP ALONG DOTTED LINE—THEN MAIL.



## The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my four triple volumes shown here, containing twelve mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all four volumes for the special new member price of only \$1 plus shipping or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the club's monthly Preview which describes my next selections, but I am not obligated to accept them. I will always have at least ten days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book within 21 days for full credit. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only \$7.49, plus shipping. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ 1-TT

Street \_\_\_\_\_ D19L6L

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be served from Ontario; offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# BIG NAME MYSTERIES FOR JUST \$1

(Worth \$82.95 in publishers' editions!)



See Inside Cover for Details

TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED